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Literacy Ontario

Setting the agenda: The Ontario literacy research strategy

Literacy and Basic Skills Section
Workplace Preparation Branch
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Ontario

Setting the agenda: The Ontario literacy research strategy

A strategy for literacy research and development activities

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Executive Summary

Why develop an adult literacy research strategy?

Since 1986, when the Ontario government began support for literacy services, literacy agencies and literacy practitioners have displayed a keen interest in research in order to provide effective instruction for adult learners. The Ontario government has supported this interest by funding many projects intended to develop Ontario's literacy field. Examples of such research projects include on-line research conducted by Laubach Literacy of Ontario, the Ontario portion of the International Adult Literacy Survey, work on the economic value of literacy volunteers conducted by Community Literacy of Ontario, and learning outcomes.

While the Ontario government has supported various literacy research activities, there has been no particular research agenda to guide Ontario literacy in this area. Since 1995, there has been a significant reform of Ontario's training system, including literacy and basic skills services. As part of this reform, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), through its Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Section, has begun to focus its support for adult literacy research in order to improve literacy practice. To achieve this goal effectively, LBS has developed a literacy research strategy in order to establish an agenda for literacy research in the province. Through the process of developing the strategy, LBS sought to obtain advice from the literacy field, identify research-related needs, determine key research topics, and propose strategies that would help to focus research activities in the province.

Purpose of the research strategy

The overall purpose of the research strategy is to promote high quality research that will inform adult literacy practice and policy in Ontario. The primary intent is to focus research efforts on those questions that are most likely to lead to significant and meaningful improvements in literacy learning for adults in Ontario. The specific goals of the strategy are:

- to identify the existing knowledge base and build on it to create a theoretical foundation for policy, practice, and further research in the field of adult literacy;
- to strengthen and broaden research capacity through partnerships;
- to establish procedures for planning, conducting, and monitoring research;
- to establish an initial research agenda;
- to support the design and implementation of high quality research;
- to promote the dissemination and application of research results; and

- to promote the development of a research culture and encourage increased awareness of the significance and value of research.

The strategy will serve as a guide and framework for both researchers and funding bodies. Researchers are encouraged to refer to the strategy when they are shaping research questions, formulating research designs, and exploring dissemination strategies. Similarly, it will be a reference point for the National Literacy Secretariat as the Secretariat works in partnership with Ontario to fund research initiatives through the federal-provincial funding stream. For other funding agencies and jurisdictions, the strategy will provide both an example and an indication of the literacy research needs and priorities in Ontario.

Key Issues

The LBS Section established a work group to assist in the development of a research strategy. Through the meetings with the Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group and through a literature review, a number of key issues emerged. These issues included:

- applying research results, sharing information about research, and disseminating research results;
- recognising and building on previous research;
- establishing general directions and priorities for research;
- identifying the skills and organisation necessary to conduct research;
- encouraging more academic and theoretical research in adult literacy;
- linking practitioners to research and incorporating them into the research process;
- addressing the ethics of literacy research; and
- improving the quality of literacy research.

The research strategy: Objectives, methodologies, and proposed activities

The overall goal of the strategy is to focus existing funding as well as to build on the mandate, capacity, and expertise of existing organisations. However, in some cases, it will be necessary to go outside the Ontario literacy field in order to address a specific research need. The underlying premise of the strategy is that individuals and organisations will work in partnership and collaboration.

Establishing research priorities

The strategy proposes an initial research agenda that focuses literacy research in Ontario around five major themes:

- adult learners and adult learning;
- program design, instructional content, and effective practices;
- practitioner training and professional development;

- learner assessment and the impact of adult literacy programming; and
- policy.

This working agenda provides the baseline for the development of literacy research in Ontario. The five research themes provide a framework and set general directions for future research. This framework will be used to focus literacy research over a three-year period with the understanding that the specific priorities within each theme may change over time as research is conducted and new knowledge is gained.

Building on experience

As a result of Ontario's accomplishments since 1986, many of the elements of a research strategy are now in place. For example, AlphaPlus Centre already has a mandate for providing resource and technology support. Moreover, Ontario has the experience of developing complex, multi-year initiatives, such as learning outcomes and AlphaRoute, an online learning approach.

In order to carry out the Ontario literacy research strategy, the following elements will need to be developed:

Proposed Activities

- Commission a review and critical analysis of adult literacy research in Ontario (1980 to 2000).
- Train practitioners to use research findings.
- Develop research information services for each of the four streams — Anglophone, Deaf, Francophone and Native — through Alpha Plus Centre.
- Provide a focus for the three service organisations (Alpha Plus, Centre FORA, Ningwakwe) to develop action research in curriculum and learning materials.
- Identify research priorities in each stream and sector and incorporate them into their strategic plans and annual business plans.
- Establish practitioner sabbaticals, grants, and release time to pursue research activities.
- Incorporate ethical standards into all research proposals to be funded by Ontario.
- Establish a centre for literacy research at a major Ontario university.
- Support conferences, colloquia, and seminars focussing on research in order to involve academic researchers and practitioners.

Chapter 1 Background and context

Why develop an adult literacy research strategy?

The general purpose of the literacy strategy is to promote forward-thinking, high quality literacy research that will support and inform literacy services in Ontario. Ontario has benefitted from the research efforts of other jurisdictions in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. During the past several years, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) LBS Program has supported various literacy research activities but there has been no particular research agenda to guide work in this area. Recently, the LBS Section began to focus its support to adult literacy research. The goal has been to focus research resources on significant themes and questions that will result in improvements in literacy practice. To meet this goal, the development of a literacy research strategy that would establish an agenda for literacy research in Ontario was necessary. Through the process of developing the strategy, LBS staff sought to obtain advice from the field, identify research-related needs, determine key research topics, and propose strategies that would help to focus research activities in the province.

The strategy is also intended to clarify and underline the importance of research in ensuring quality literacy programming in Ontario, to give profile to literacy research, and to foster the development of a research culture in the field of adult literacy. It will serve as a guide for everyone in the field — researchers, practitioners, administrators, policy-makers, government, and other funding agencies. The strategy will provide an indication of the literacy research needs and priorities in Ontario. It will position the provincial government's support for literacy within the field, within MTCU, and in relation to National Literacy Secretariat, with the ultimate goal of strengthening adult literacy delivery and serving learners better.

Review of Ontario Government support to adult literacy research

Through MTCU's LBS Program, the provincial government provides significant support for literacy research activities in Ontario, $2 million. About 3% of the LBS budget was assigned to research and development in 1999/2000. Additional support for literacy research in the province — $4.2 million — is provided through the federal-provincial cost-sharing program with the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS).

In the past, the Ontario government often provided support for research and development to discrete projects, small-scale research activities developed to respond to needs identified by individual agencies or regions. For the most part, these research activities have been conducted using action research, program-based research, and participatory research approaches. Support has also been given for needs assessments and evaluations. Although reports were prepared for these various research activities, the research results were often not widely disseminated and, for the most part, the impact of these initiatives could have been greater. Recently, the LBS Program has supported large-scale projects of regional and provincial significance in order to support broad literacy initiatives.

In addition to supporting literacy research initiatives in the field, the LBS Section has also commissioned specific research. Recent examples of research commissioned by the LBS Section include:

- AlphaRoute distance learning project;
- Statistics Canada to develop additional low-literacy items for the International Life Skills Survey (ILSS) in 2002;
- Survey on the literacy levels of immigrants to Ontario;
- Francophone literacy survey; and
- Youth literacy survey.

Ontario has led Canada in these partnerships with the National Literacy Secretariat and Statsitics Canada.

Brief overview of adult literacy research activities in Ontario

Over the past twenty years, there has been a significant level of literacy research activity in Ontario, most of which has been funded by the provincial government, often supported by the National Literacy Secretariat on a cost-sharing basis. This report does not attempt to provide an historical review of literacy research in Ontario. Rather, it highlights a few examples of current and past research activities to give a sense of the diverse nature and scope of literacy research activity in the province.

The largest and most impressive step in building a research culture within Ontario literacy was the establishment of Alpha Ontario in 1990 by the governments of Ontario and Canada. Alpha Ontario was established to develop and circulate a collection of adult literacy and language training materials in English and French. In 1998, Alpha Ontario's mandate was enlarged to incorporate technology support and became Centre AlphaPlus Centre. The Centre has the largest resource collection on adult literacy in the world and there is Internet access to its collection. In addition, the Centre facilitates electronic conferencing and distance learning, markets and distributes curriculum materials as well as supports curriculum development in the Anglophone and Deaf literacy streams. The Centre works with Centre FORA, a Francophone centre for materials development, and Ningwakwe Learning Press, a Native materials development centre. The Government of Ontario supports Centre AlphaPlus Centre with ongoing operational funding and the National Literacy Secretariat supports the Centre through the funding of projects.

Each year, there are many different projects which constitute the main body of research and development in Ontario. The 1997-1998 Field Development Projects Bulletin lists over one hundred funded research and development projects. Research themes cover such topics as literacy service planning development, professional development and recognition, the development of the recognition of adult learning strategy, numeracy, prior learning assessment, promotion of technological support, services for adults with developmental disabilities, curriculum development, and Deaf services development. The diversity of the projects reflects the diversity of the Ontario literacy field and its needs.

As is recommended later in this report, there is a need to look more intensively at the history of literacy research in Ontario, to prepare a critical review and summary of Ontario literacy research, and to document the knowledge base that has accrued as a result of previous research activities. (See Appendix 1, Strategy 1.2.1.) For a quick snapshot of a few research activities, see Appendix 8, "Selected Ontario Research Activities."

The LBS Program

Ontario's support for literacy development has evolved with the introduction of the new Literacy and Basic Skills Program on 1 April 1999. While Ontario continues to be committed to research and development, the new Program identifies its core business as service delivery and emphasises accountability as an important principle. The Ministry has also identified the core services for which it contracts with agencies supporting development in the field. Among the methods used to ensure accountability is a contract between the Ministry and each literacy agency funded through the LBS Program and the submission of an annual business plan by each LBS agency. The annual business plan demonstrates how each agency will deliver the core services which have been contracted for by the Ministry. The new Program and its tighter focus provide the framework for this research strategy as well as an opportunity for greater accountability.

In the field, the LBS Program is delivered by a variety of organisations.

Delivery Agencies

LBS agencies provide these key services for adult literacy learners:

- Information and referral;
- Assessment;
- Training plan development;
- Training; and
- Follow up.

Regional Networks

Regional networks support delivery agencies in their regions, and support local planning and co-ordination of services.

Sectoral Bodies

Groups representing delivery agencies within colleges, school boards, and communities address issues relevant to their sectors.

Umbrella Organisations

The umbrella organisations for the Anglophone, Francophone, Deaf, and Native literacy streams facilitate communications and co-ordinate field development.

Research and Development Services
AlphaPlus, Centre FORA, and Ningwakwe Learning Press provide information, materials development, and technical communication support to the literacy field.

The national context — National Literacy Secretariat (NLS)

Ontario has a history of co-operation with NLS in jointly funding field development and research projects through the federal-provincial cost-sharing program. In February 1998, NLS adopted a new research framework, Enhancing literacy research in Canada, which is intended to enhance co-operation between the NLS and its partners in order to support research and to promote dissemination and application of research results. This framework was followed in December 1998 by a subsequent announcement of a new joint initiative between NLS and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) entitled Valuing literacy in Canada. This new initiative focuses on exploring social, cultural, and economic factors that affect adult literacy. It provides an opportunity for practitioners and literacy agencies to form partnerships with researchers and academic institutions and to approach SSHRC for funding. This Ontario strategy complements the NLS efforts by including an action plan as an integral part of the strategy.

The Ontario Literacy Research Strategy recognises the importance of co-operation, collaboration, and partnership with NLS. It is anticipated that the National Literacy Secretariat will be guided by this strategy as it works in partnership with Ontario.

Chapter 2 Developing the strategy

The process

To develop this research strategy, LBS followed a process which included a work group to seek advice from the field, a literature review, individual interviews, an analysis of the findings, and preparation of a report.

The Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group

In April 1998, a work group was assembled to provide representatives of the literacy field in Ontario with an opportunity to discuss the various questions and issues related to adult literacy research in Ontario and to advise LBS staff on the key elements of the research strategy.

Included in the Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group were representatives of the umbrella organisations (Ontario Literacy Coalition, Ontario Native Literacy Coalition, GOAL: Ontario Literacy for Deaf People (G.O.L.D.), and the Coalition francophone pour l'alphabétisation et la formation de base en Ontario), and representatives of the service organisations (AlphaPlus Centre, Centre FORA, Ningwakwe Learning Press). Staff from the National Literacy Secretariat and from the LBS Section also participated in the meetings of the work group. A list of work group members is appended (Appendix 2). There were five one-day meetings of the work group held in April 1998, June 1998, August 1998, December 1998, and February 1999.

The work group was asked to propose key questions and issues that the strategy should address, to discuss varying and differing roles in the field related to literacy research, and to identify research priorities. As part of the work group process, resource persons with experience in research were invited to the meetings to provide background information about practitioner research (teacher research) and clarify distinctions between traditional research and practitioner research.

During the course of the five meetings, the work group:

- established definitions for key research terminology;
- developed a statement of principles to be considered for the strategy (Appendix 3);
- identified different types of research and the types of organisations best equipped to carry out particular types of research (Appendix 4); and
- generated lists of priorities for literacy research in Ontario (Appendix 5).

These products of the work group meetings provided a foundation for the development of the research strategy.

The literature review

The literature review focused on examples of adult literacy and adult basic education research strategies developed in other jurisdictions, research standards and guidelines, ethics in research, and literacy research journals and similar dissemination tools.

Searches were conducted using on-line library catalogues and indexes available from AlphaPlus Centre, International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) Resource Centre, On-Line Research and Information Services of the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT), York University, and Ryerson University. The National Literacy Secretariat provided materials for the review and the LBS files were available for reference. Data was also gathered through Internet searches and e-mail requests to adult literacy units in other jurisdictions.

Individual interviews

Some individual interviews were conducted by LBS staff, primarily to solicit additional information and obtain answers to questions raised as a result of the work group process. As well, some work group members brought forward information obtained through their own interviews in the community.

The report

The Ministry contracted Gladys Watson to carry out research on other jurisdictions and prepare a first draft, based on advice from the work group, supplemented with information from the literature review, Internet searches, and interviews. LBS staff then prepared the research strategy.

Chapter 3 Reviewing the literature and identifying the issues

The overall aim of the literature review was to seek out material that would inform the development of a literacy research strategy for Ontario. This process involved an exploration of themes in the literature, such as literacy research policies and strategies, research approaches and methods, research practices, dissemination of research, and the impact of research on literacy policy and practice.

A central objective of the literature review was to gather information about the status of literacy research in other jurisdictions, and to explore how it might inform literacy research work in Ontario. This approach led to a focus on materials that describe literacy research efforts in other jurisdictions, examples of adult literacy and adult basic education research strategies developed in other jurisdictions, research developments in related fields, research standards and guidelines, ethics in research, and literacy research journals and other research dissemination tools.

Emerging issues

Throughout the literature, both print and electronic, it becomes clear that there is a need for more research into adult literacy. As the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA) booklet on literacy research illustrates, the "...area of [adult] literacy is one domain in the broad field of education where relatively little attention has been given to research, evaluations, and statistics" (UNESCO Institute for Education 1999). The international conversations held at CONFINTEA, highlight the need to build a more effective knowledge base that will inform the development and delivery of adult literacy education. This concern about developing a theoretical knowledge base for adult literacy education is reflected in the literacy research strategies and frameworks developed in Australia, the United States, and Canada during the past four years. It appears that there is a growing interest in developing focused and concerted research efforts that will result in improved learning opportunities for adults who want to acquire and strengthen literacy skills.

There are some trends to be noted as general observations. There is an increased emphasis on exploring and acknowledging the role of research and development and its relationship to policy and practice. Governments and literacy organisations are interested not only in setting directions for research but also in how to organise, support, and administer co-ordinated research efforts that will make the best use of limited resources and lead to significant improvements in adult literacy learning. This aim is reflected in the recent activities in Canada, Australia, and the U.S.A. to develop national research frameworks and strategies.

In general, there is a recognition that the literacy field is in its early stages with respect to research on how adults develop literacy skills. There have been some research efforts, but there is a need to do more and to ensure that research is focused on the particular needs and interests of adult literacy learners.

> Although an old endeavour, adult literacy is a new scientific territory. Compared to reading in school-aged children, the research literature on adult literacy acquisition is only just beginning (Wagner 1993).

The goal is to develop a research culture to support adult literacy enquiry. There is an opportunity to learn from the research history of the broader education domain, but there is also a very clear need to conduct research that is specific to the adult literacy learning context. In Ontario, for example, the research work of Dr. David Olson on the cognitive implications of children's reading and writing (Olson 1994) is well-recognised as a significant contribution to the theoretical body of knowledge about how children learn. There is a need for similar research and theoretical developments in the adult literacy field.

There is also an emphasis in the literature on the need for research and practice to inform each other (National Literacy Secretariat 1998; Australia Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs; National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy 1997 and 1998; Horsman and Norton 1999; Henbest and VanderMarel 1997). There is a recognition that the literacy field needs to develop a theoretical framework which can only be shaped through dialogue and interaction between researchers and those who are actively involved in the field, including practitioners and learners. This discussion about the inter-relationship between, and among, research, policy, and practice is prevalent not only in the adult literacy field but also in the field of vocational education and training. There is a growing recognition in a number of countries of the need to revisit the role and relationships of research and development in a period of extensive educational reform. This process involves "a turning away from the traditional technocratic model of R&D, with its assumptions of a linear process from research to implementation, to more interactive models in which the relationships between research, policy and practice are both more intimate and more complex and uncertain" (Kearns 1993). The research strategies that have been developed recently in Australia and the United States, and the current research framework of the National Literacy Secretariat in Canada seek to bring forward research activities and processes that promote increased interaction between and among those who are involved in research, policy, and practice.

Literacy research strategies in other jurisdictions

Through the review process, it became apparent that the question of literacy research is being given a significant profile in a number of other jurisdictions, and that Ontario is not alone in its efforts to develop a literacy research strategy. Other jurisdictions, such as Canada, Australia, and the United States, have taken steps to develop strategy documents that will guide the future of literacy research in their respective constituencies. Internationally, literacy research was on the agenda at CONFINTEA, the fifth International Conference on Adult Education hosted by the UNESCO Institute for Studies in Education in Hamburg in 1997 (UNESCO Institute for Education 1999).

In Canada, the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) has developed a framework, Enhancing literacy research in Canada, to guide its support to literacy research in Canada (Human Resources Development Canada, National Literacy Secretariat 1998). In this framework, NLS articulates some fundamental principles that will guide its research support. There are two key components in the NLS document: strengthening the infrastructure for literacy research and providing continued support for literacy research projects. With respect to the first component, NLS has identified potential areas of support: building research capacity, improving the quality of research, encouraging co-operation between researchers and practitioners, and improving dissemination and application of research findings.

In the United States, the process of developing a national agenda for research and development in adult education and literacy was initiated by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). Subsequently, the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) was created at Harvard University and the two efforts were merged into a single agenda-setting activity. The Education Department's Division of Adult Education and Literacy, which administers national funds supporting research and development, joined with NIFL and NCSALL as a partner in this process. The resulting National agenda for research and development in adult education and literacy (Research Triangle Institute, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy 1997, March 27) seeks to focus research efforts on those questions that hold the greatest promise for improving and expanding services to adults who have low literacy skills, who do not speak English, or who do not have a high school degree. In addition to identifying research priorities, two key areas of activity were emphasised: the importance of wide dissemination of research findings and the development of research capacity. The U.S. research agenda was developed through extensive consultation with learning and literacy professionals from across the country. Through this process, five main research topics were identified:

- adult learning, recruitment, and persistence;
- types of instruction that work best;
- learner assessment and program evaluation;
- staff development; and
- policy and structure.

For each of these topics, there is a list of questions identified by the Ontario literacy field. Under the umbrella of the national research agenda, a specific research agenda was identified for adult ESL. The Research agenda for adult ESL (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy 1998, September) was also developed through a consultative process. It proposes that ESL research be centred around what are, in essence, the same five topics as the national literacy agenda; however, questions identified for further research in each of the five areas reflect the particular research needs of the ESL sector.

As noted, both the U.S. and Australian strategies encompassed ESL as well as literacy. A key purpose of the Australian Integrated research strategy. Adult literacy report was to develop an integrated agenda to ensure fair access to research processes and resources for literacy, ESL, and numeracy (Australia Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 1996). The Australian strategy calls for further clarification of the distinctive roles of adult ESL, literacy, and numeracy within the research agenda. It recommends an exploration into the similarities and differences among the three fields of practice, and identification of distinctive research needs for each. Numeracy is separately addressed and discussed in the Australian research strategy; however, numeracy advocates are interested in setting a separate national agenda for examining numeracy and numeracy research in itself. They are concerned that, for the most part, numeracy has always been an add-on, the "and numeracy" factor. This position is articulated in Adult numeracy policy and research in Australia (Cumming 1996) which illustrates the changing definitions of numeracy and presents recommendations for numeracy research relating to policy, provision, and pedagogy.

The Australian Integrated research strategy is concerned with the processes for setting research priorities and commissioning and funding research. It seeks to establish guidelines for conducting research including quality assurance, ethics, dissemination, and evaluation. Five major steps are identified in the strategy, and detailed strategies are identified for each of these steps:

- set directions for research;
- build the knowledge base for research;
- diversify and expand the research base;
- ensure fair access to research processes and outcomes; and
- ensure high quality research.

The process to develop the strategy included a literature review, a detailed survey of existing research, data collection through questionnaires, and consultations with the field through interviews. The resulting report is a detailed document which reflects the scope and nature of the Australian delivery system.

Prior to the strategy, literacy research in Australia was conducted by a relatively small number of individuals who were seen to be experts in the field and these same persons were being called on repeatedly, in a manner similar to that in Ontario. There were also some concerns around the division between academic researchers and practitioners. The strategy was released in 1996 and there has been an implementation period. Canadian researcher Jenny Horsman visited Australia in September and October 1998 on a speaking tour. During the tour, she conducted informal research, summarised in a report prepared recently for the National Literacy Secretariat. She asked a range of individuals and groups about what "spaces" had been important in Australia in supporting critical reflection and research in adult literacy. Although the Horsman study did not focus specifically on the Australian research strategy, it is interesting to read her comments on the differences in Australian research between 1990 and 1998 and to ponder the extent to which these changes are related to implementation of the strategy.

The contrast in the adult literacy field, visible at the national adult literacy

> conference, between 1990 and 1998, was striking. In 1990, at the national conference, the first group of large-scale research projects funded by the Commonwealth government for adult literacy year was reported. They did not seem to be sophisticated or highly theorised pieces and there was clearly tension about who had received grants and whether their work would be of value to practitioners.
>
> In 1998, the keynote speakers and many workshop leaders were academics or practitioners with graduate experience, speaking about research and theoretical issues that were clearly relevant to the field and highly valued by many practitioners. Research offered new insights for practice, and many practitioners seemed interested in discussion that wove between theory and practice, often quite seamlessly. Two speakers were academics from outside the literacy area, both futurists. One of their presentations focused on new directions in technology, the other offered an overview of theoretical trends and opened questions about their impact on the adult literacy field. Participants seemed challenged and energised by the implications of these presentations for their work (Horsman 1999, January 14: 4).

In response to Horsman's question about what factors people felt had created change, several spoke of an active attempt in the field to develop a research culture and to develop the "theorising of the field". They felt that there had been an emphasis on creating an academic field as well as a cross-fertilisation between the Academy and the field of practice.

> Although I had been expecting an emphasis on the value of the national adult literacy research network — which I did hear about extensively — I was struck by the importance people placed on a wide range of other actors, such as a funded journal distributed free to programs, the availability of a broad range of courses at universities across the country, as well as a range of professional development opportunities offered within the field (Horsman 1999, January 14: 4-5).

The Horsman report identifies a number of key elements from the Australian experience that might be applied in Canada. Some of these might be considered appropriate for the Ontario context, and have served to inform the development of this Ontario strategy.

Literacy research centres

Implementation of the U.S. research and development agenda has been largely the responsibility of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL), a research centre that is a collaborative effort between a university, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, and a non-profit agency, World Education. There are also three other university partners involved in this three-year initiative. NCSALL provides an interesting model of how a literacy centre might be shaped to provide and co-ordinate an integrated set of research activities and services (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy 1998, September).

The goal of NCSALL is to help the field of adult basic education define a comprehensive research agenda, to pursue basic and applied research under that agenda, to build partnerships between researchers and practitioners; and to disseminate research and best practices to practitioners, scholars, and policy makers. NCSALL offers a balanced complement of research activities and services. It conducts research, publishes research briefs, collaborates with World Education to publish a practitioner research magazine, is developing an annual scholarly review of literacy research, co-ordinates a practitioner dissemination and research network, and manages a scholarship program.

In Canada, there is a literacy research centre associated with the Faculty of Education of the University of Alberta. The Centre for Research on Literacy is an academic centre addressing research questions concerning literacy for children as well as for adults. The Centre is funded by the University of Alberta. Recently, the Centre received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat to develop a Directory of Literacy Research in Canada. (See Appendix 7.) In addition, the Centre de documentation sur l'education des adultes et la condition feminine, in Montreal, has been supported by the National Literacy Secretariat to develop a Francophone directory of literacy research.

Research developments in related fields

As suggested by the Australian experience, there is value in looking outside the field of adult literacy for research developments elsewhere. While the content of research in other fields may not always be directly relevant to adult literacy, there are many other developments that could help to shape and inform literacy research in the province. This list provides just a few examples of activities that might be of interest as we seek to shape a research culture in the literacy field in Ontario.

- Research institutes and organisations elsewhere: Other fields have established organisations or institutes that focus on research in their respective areas. These research centres might be considered as models for the adult literacy field, but in addition they generate research and research-related information that can help to inform literacy research.

  For example L'Institute Roeher Institute is a centre that promotes research and public policy analysis, information dissemination, and training related to the equality, participation, and self-determination of people with intellectual and other disabilities. L'Institute Roeher Institute not only conducts research on issues but also contributes to general dialogue about research approaches and methodologies. For example, the Institute has stimulated new thinking about the research frameworks that are being used in the field of disability. Since disability issues cut across disciplines and are of concern to the adult literacy field, it may be beneficial to pursue information exchanges with researchers in the disability field.

Another example is the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW)/L'Institute canadien de recherches sur les femme (ICREF), an organisation that initiates, promotes, and publishes feminist research. For over twenty years, CRIAW/ICREF has been providing leadership in feminist research, conducting collaborative academic/community research, and bridging the gap between university-based research and community-based research. CRIAW's experience is documented in a booklet entitled Research partnerships: A feminist approach to communities and universities working together (Muzychka et al 1996). Since research partnerships are a key element of the National Literacy Secretariat's new literacy research framework, the Ontario literacy field could benefit from the accumulated experience and wisdom of CRIAW and other agencies with similar research experiences.

- Related disciplines: Through this brief literature search, some examples of research activities in related disciplines were identified as having potential interest to the adult literacy research initiative in Ontario.

  There is a focal point for literacy research associated with the Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) where Dr. David Olson conducts research on the cognitive implications of reading and writing in children (Olson 1994). Although this research focuses specifically on children, it does provide a point of reference for adult literacy research.

  NALL: New Approaches to Lifelong Learning is a major research initiative currently under the leadership of Dr. David Livingstone at the Centre for the Study of Education and Work, Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). The NALL: New Approaches to Lifelong Learning project is exploring the impact of informal learning on adult education and training. Preliminary research results contain some data that may be relevant to adult literacy research in Ontario.

Research initiatives of interest to Native, Francophone, and Deaf literacy service streams in Ontario

- Aboriginal networking: The Indigenous Education Network (IEN) situated at OISE/UT provides a forum for dialogue on issues relating to Aboriginal education and research. OISE/UT also offers the Aboriginal Educational Resources Database.

- The UNESCO Institute for Education's follow-up to CONFINTEA, the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education provides an avenue for the franco-ontarien literacy community to develop research exchanges and partnerships with literacy researchers and organisations in other countries of la Francophonie (UNESCO Institute for Education 1999).

- The Gallaudet Research Institute is associated with the Graduate School of Research at Gallaudet University, North America's only Deaf university. It currently sponsors a number of research projects through its "English Literacy 2000" research program (Gallaudet Research Institute 1999).

Ethics in research

The literature reflects the significance of ethics in research and also the complexity of identifying and addressing ethical issues during the course of research. All research that involves human subjects has the potential of being exploitative and damaging although the intent of the research may be to benefit those who are being researched. The aim of research codes of ethics is to minimise damage and ensure the rights, privacy, confidentiality, welfare, and well-being of those who are being researched.

With respect to codes of ethics and ethical guidelines, the primary reference tool for humanities and social sciences research in Canada is the Tri-Council policy statement. Ethical conduct for research involving humans (Medical Research Council of Canada, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada 1998). In section 6 of the document, the Councils call attention to three additional documents that are especially relevant to research on Aboriginal peoples. These documents may be of interest to researchers working with the Native literacy stream in Ontario. Section 5 on "Inclusion in research" will be of interest to researchers working with women.

Some researchers in the field express reservations about the use of codes of ethics since the codes themselves are not entirely free from bias and they can also protect the powerful (Glesne and Peshkin 1992: 110). These researchers may be more comfortable with guides to ethical research behaviour which make suggestions about how to approach, address, and resolve ethical dilemmas. As the Councils emphasise in the introduction to the Tri-Council policy statement, when codes of ethics are adopted it is important that there be a thoughtful and sensitive approach. The key is to implement the code of ethics not only to meet the requirements but to satisfy the spirit of the document.

There are various publications in the social sciences and humanities that seek to open up the dialogue around ethical research practices. Particularly with respect to qualitative research, there is an emphasis on exploring ethics as they pertain to the relations between researcher and researched (Graddol et al 1994: Chapter 2; Glesne and Peshkin 1992: Chapter 6). Researchers in some fields have devoted considerable time and thought to the question of ethics in research and have struggled to formulate documents that will assist others who are encountering similar dilemmas. For example, CRIAW/ICREF has published a booklet that describes the research ethics process that they have developed through several years of experience. This booklet may be particularly helpful to inform ethical discussions relating to literacy research since it addresses some of the complications that surface when university-based researchers and community-based researchers work together on research partnerships. University-based researchers may be bound by an institutional code of ethics and ethical review committee, whereas community-based researchers may have their own code of ethics that they use to guide their research. The CRIAW handbook is interesting because it consists primarily of questions, each set of questions framed around a small vignette or research dilemma. This is an easy-to-read, functional handbook that assists researchers to address some of the practical questions of doing research ethically.

Literacy research journals

At present, there is no Canadian scholarly journal focusing specifically on adult literacy and adult literacy research. Academic researchers who wish to publish their work must turn to other avenues such as general education journals, adult education journals, or journals on adult literacy that are published in other countries. (See Appendix 6.) A review of these journals suggests that the Australian periodical, Literacy and numeracy studies: An international journal in the education and training of adults, is an interesting example to review and consider as a possible model for publishing research results from Ontario.

In the United States and Australia, there are some literacy magazines that focus on literacy research, particularly as it relates to practice. One literacy magazine that is designed specifically to encourage practitioners to read and write about literacy research is Focus on basics, published by World Education in partnership with the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) in Massachusetts (Focus on basics 1999, March). Focus on basics connects research with practice. It presents best practices, current research on adult literacy, and how research is used by practitioners, administrators, and policy makers. Each issue focuses on a particular theme. Examples of themes of previous issues include: "What is research," "Reading," "Content-based instruction," "Learner motivation," "Theories of change," and "Adult multiple intelligences." This journal introduces some complex theoretical material, but seeks to make this material accessible and relevant to daily practice. It includes first-hand accounts of research in practice.

Fine print, produced by the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council, and Converse, published by the Network of Women in Further Education, are two magazines that are valued by practitioners in Australia. (See Appendix 6.) These magazines promote a wide range of debate in an accessible and inviting format. Their contents range from news and stories of practice to sophisticated theoretical discussions. Fine print includes articles by academics and practitioners, as well as research reports. It is a widely read magazine with a high profile in the field and this encourages academics to contribute even though it is not a refereed or scholarly journal (Horsman 1999).

Canadian social trends is identified as a non-literacy magazine that provides an interesting example of popular dissemination of research findings. Canadian social trends is published quarterly by Statistics Canada. It reports on complex statistical research using brief, accessible, readable articles. Short segments of information are highlighted in boxes, graphs, or charts. This magazine provides an interesting model for reporting on statistical and quantitative research studies (Canadian Social Trends 1998, Summer).

Views from the field

As noted in Chapter 2 of this report, advice from the field was sought primarily through the mechanism of the Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group. (See Appendix 2.) The minutes of the meetings of the work group provided valuable information which is reflected in the summary findings of this report, and more specifically in Appendices 3, 4, and 5.

Summary of findings:

Making the Ontario literacy field aware of research

There has been a significant research effort in Ontario during the past several years but there are varying levels of awareness in the field about this research, its outcomes, and how it might inform practice and policy. Advice from the literacy field indicates that there are mixed attitudes towards research. Some individuals and agencies are advocates of research and are actively involved in promoting and carrying out research, others express interest in research but are not clear about how to become involved, while others see research as an academic or "ivory tower" issue that holds little relevance to daily practice. There is a need to promote increased awareness and understanding of the value, significance, and applicability of research. These findings point to the need to develop a research culture in the field.

Applying research results

There is a concern that the findings and outcomes of research are often not applied in the field. Practitioners need support and training to assist them to apply research findings in practice. There is a need to develop a culture of research, to foster an environment where practitioners are comfortable to review and comment on research, to apply research outcomes in practice, and to be involved in program-based research. There is a need for professional development that will focus on how to apply research in practice.

Recognising and building on previous research

Individuals and organisations in the field have indicated that they would like to build on previous research work. There is a need to document the research that has happened in the past and to clarify what we have learned from these earlier research efforts. This earlier research forms part of the knowledge base and the theoretical base for literacy practice in the province and it needs to be documented and made available to the field. There is a need to extract significant findings from this previous research and apply these findings in practice as appropriate.

Establishing general directions and priorities for research

For the most part, literacy research conducted in the province during the past several years has tended to be in the form of discrete projects, either field development projects or research projects commissioned by LBS. These projects have addressed particular research questions that were significant at the time but were not necessarily part of a larger, co-ordinated research effort. In order to respond effectively to needs in the field and make better use of research resources, there is a need to co-ordinate efforts and to develop a longer-term strategy for literacy research that will set general directions and identify priorities that reflect the directions of the government and the needs of the literacy field, including the particular needs of individual service streams

Clarifying who conducts research, what types of research, and when

Over time, there have been many different organisations and individuals involved in adult literacy research in Ontario. There is a need to consider who is to be involved in research and who is best equipped to do certain types of research. The mandates of the various partner organisations in the Ontario literacy field have been reviewed, revised, and clarified through the program reform process. This reform has included some clarification as to the roles and responsibilities in relation to research; however, there is a need to clarify who will do what in literacy research in Ontario. Each organisation brings to the field a particular capacity and certain skills and strengths, and there is an opportunity to strengthen research capacity in Ontario by building on these strengths. There is also a need for a co-ordinated effort, with research partnerships as appropriate. There is an interest in encouraging all interested parties to contribute to the research process in order to establish a foundation for a literacy research culture. Nonetheless, there will inevitably be occasions when no existing LBS agency is in a position to carry out a specific type of research project. On such occasions, the ministry will need to consider agencies outside the field.

Using different types of research

To respond to the variety of different research issues and questions in the field, there is a need to promote and support a variety of different types of research, including both traditional research and practitioner research. There is also a need to have a balanced complement of different types of research approaches and methods.

Encouraging more academic and theoretical research in adult literacy

Although there has been research in adult literacy conducted at the university level in Ontario, it has been relatively limited, particularly when compared to the scope of academic research conducted in the area of children's literacy. More work around the theory of how adults acquire and retain literacy skills is required. For the most part, university level research into adult literacy has not been a co-ordinated or systematic effort. There have been discrete research efforts happening independently at various universities in Ontario. In some cases, this activity consisted of statistical research supported by LBS and NLS, such as the International Adult Literacy Survey in 1994. In other cases, research has happened at the university level when practitioners and administrators in the literacy field chose to pursue studies in a personal capacity or sought partnerships on a particular research initiative. There is a need to find ways to increase scholarly and theoretical research in adult literacy in Ontario. Currently, there appears to be an increasing interest on the part of the academic community to become more involved in adult literacy research.

The first challenge in ensuring the effective performance of the provincial research strategy is to create a culture of research. It is vital that all partners in literacy and basic skills support this strategy and are committed to participating fully in developing research projects. All of the organisations working in this area have to be made aware of the necessity of such a strategy and understand its potential impact on the promotion of literacy and the development of Ontario's literacy field. It is essential to provide training and support to LBS delivery and development organisations and to all those who work in this area. Sensitisation, training, participation, and support for people in the field are key elements in creating a research culture. Everyone who works with the Literacy and Basic Skills Program must be committed to, and take an active part in, the process, in order to ensure its smooth development and subsequent success.

Linking practitioners to research and incorporating them into the research process

For research results to be applied in practice, it is critical that practitioners be informed about research, be comfortable reading about and working with research findings, and be given the opportunity to learn how to apply research in their practice. As well, there is considerable interest in encouraging practitioners to become involved in program-based research or research in practice so that learners receive the best services from staff who are up to date in their approaches.

Addressing the ethics of literacy research

In the advice gathered from the field, there was a strong concern expressed about the need for literacy research to be conducted in an ethical manner. This concern was also reflected in the literature review. There is a need to identify appropriate ethical guidelines for the conduct of literacy research and to incorporate such guidelines in the research process.

Improving the quality of literacy research

In both the advice from the field and the literature review, there is a definite interest in ensuring that literacy research be of high quality and that good research practices be adopted. There is a need to identify good practices for literacy research and to ensure that literacy research in Ontario is conducted according to generally accepted standards.

Sharing information about research and disseminating research results

There is a need for more information about all aspects of literacy research, including information practices, announcements of research funding, information about research in progress, research reports, research results, and the application of research findings. In particular, there is a strong interest in ensuring that research results are widely disseminated in a timely fashion in accessible formats and in a language and style appropriate to the target audience. This interest speaks to the need for a more comprehensive information and dissemination system, and a field-wide commitment to sharing information about literacy research. Important elements of this system, such as the AlphaPlus Centre, are already in place. However, other aspects will need to be developed. For example, there is also the need to exchange research information with literacy organisations and literacy researchers in other jurisdictions.

Chapter 4 A strategy for literacy research in Ontario: Purpose and Guiding Principles

Purpose of the research strategy

The overall purpose of the research strategy is to promote high quality research that will inform adult literacy practice and policy in Ontario. The primary intent is to focus research efforts on those questions that are most likely to lead to significant and meaningful improvements in literacy learning for adults in Ontario.

The specific goals of the strategy are:

- to identify the existing knowledge base and build on it to create a theoretical foundation for policy, practice, and further research in the field of adult literacy;
- to promote the development of a research culture and encourage increased awareness of the significance and value of research;
- to strengthen and broaden research capacity, such as partnerships;
- to establish procedures for planning, conducting, and monitoring research;
- to establish an initial research agenda with priorities as advised by the field;
- to support the design and implementation of high quality research; and
- to promote the dissemination and application of research results.

The strategy will serve as a guide for researchers, practitioners, and policy makers.

Guiding principles

A set of guiding principles has been articulated as the foundation of the research strategy. These guiding principles are based on a statement of principles developed by the Ontario Literacy Strategy Work Group during 1998. (See Appendix 3.)

Principle 1: Research builds on and enhances the adult literacy knowledge base.

Research is a systematic process of enquiry and critical reflection that enhances the adult literacy knowledge base. Research recognises and builds on previous knowledge, experience, and practice but also generates new knowledge and deeper understanding.

Through research, we ask questions. Since the adult literacy field is relatively new, there is much to learn and many questions that we might ask. Research provides the opportunity to assess and evaluate what we know, how we know it, and to add to what we know.

Principle 2: Research is necessary to support practice, policy formation, and professional development.

Through research, we gain knowledge about what works and what doesn't work. Literacy research provides information, knowledge, and critical reflection — all of which help shape good practice, determine relevant policy, improve the operation of literacy agencies, and develop meaningful professional development.

Principle 3: Literacy research should be quality research.

All literacy research projects should meet generally accepted standards of quality for social science research. Quality standards for research include considerations such as:

- appropriateness and relevance of research questions or hypotheses;
- appropriateness of research methodology;
- a review of relevant literature;
- sampling design;
- data collection methods;
- data processing and analysis methods;
- objectivity and subjectivity;
- validity, reliability, and applicability of research findings; and
- evaluation and critical reflection.

It is recognised that different types of research methods may require increased emphasis on particular quality concerns. A quantitative study that involves a compilation of statistics may require more attention to the sampling design whereas a qualitative study that involves action research in a program setting may require greater attention to the participant-observer process.

Principle 4: Literacy research conforms to ethical guidelines.

Research conducted in the adult literacy field should conform to relevant and ethical guidelines. Ethical guidelines address the need for respect for human dignity, informed consent by research subjects, special safeguards for vulnerable persons, standards of privacy and confidentiality, justice and inclusiveness, analysis of the harms and benefits to participants associated with research, and other considerations related to ethical research practice.

Ethical issues arise when research involves humans or focuses on important human issues. The main purpose of applying ethical guidelines to research is to protect the dignity, well-being, and rights of people involved in the research, and to avoid any harm.

Principle 5: A variety of types of research and research methods are encouraged.

Different types of research are encouraged in the literacy field, including:

- theoretical;
- andragogical and pedagogical (science of teaching);
- historical;
- statistical;
- jurisdictional (policy, structure, funding);
- program-related (best practices, program outcomes, research in practice); and
- topical (such as workplace literacy, family literacy, learning disabilities).

A variety of research methods are recognised and respected, including both quantitative and qualitative research, traditional research, and practitioner research. The choice of research methodology will vary and will be influenced by such factors as the nature and scope of the research question, and by practical matters such as available time, funding, expertise, and institutional support.

The approach to research support is balanced, recognising that there is a place in the literacy field for different types of research and different research methods.

Principle 6: Partnerships between researchers, practitioners, and learners are key to ensuring relevant research.

Partnerships are promoted to help ensure relevant and meaningful research. Partnerships between practitioners and academics provide an opportunity to strengthen the links between practice and theory. Learner involvement enriches the research experience. Partnerships help to bring diversity to the research process, encouraging consideration of a range of research questions, and adoption of various research approaches and methods.

Partnerships are encouraged between and among:

- researchers, practitioners, and learners;
- literacy agencies and academic institutions;
- literacy researchers and researchers in other disciplines; and
- literacy researchers from different service delivery streams and different delivery sectors.

Principle 7: Priorities for research are identified with advice from the field.

Research should be relevant to the program and policy needs of the adult literacy field in Ontario. Annual research priorities are to be identified with advice and input from the adult literacy field.

An appropriate balance in research priorities should be maintained between and among the four service delivery streams: Anglophone, Deaf, Francophone, and Native. Appropriate balance should also be demonstrated for the various delivery sectors: community agencies, school boards, and colleges. This approach to government funding is necessary so that all sectors and streams move forward together, leaving no part of the literacy field behind.

Principle 8: Research results should be widely disseminated.

The findings and results of literacy research projects should be widely disseminated. Sharing of research results not only increases awareness, but also promotes application of the results and stimulates further research.

The findings of research projects should be made available to practitioners, policy-makers, program administrators, learners, other researchers, the academic community, the broader literacy community, and beyond.

To ensure widespread distribution, research results should be disseminated in many different formats and through a variety of media, and in a format and language appropriate to the target audience. These formats include various media such as research journals, literacy newsletters, electronic conferences, on-line Internet publications, conferences, professional development workshops, press releases, and research reports.

Research results should be disseminated at the lowest possible cost to stakeholders and the target audience, and may be marketed to the wider community.

Dissemination of research outcomes through "practitioner-friendly" formats and media will help to ensure that practitioners have access to research results for application in their agencies.

Principle 9: Building research capacity is important.

To ensure a continuing base of research that will inform and support literacy practice and policy in the province, it is important to expand and strengthen literacy research capacity in Ontario. In addition to funding for research projects, support is required to:

- develop a comprehensive provincial system to promote literacy research;
- increase participation in literacy research;
- train future literacy researchers;
- encourage and enable practitioners to read, reflect upon, and apply research findings; and
- enable practitioners to do research.

Chapter 5 Establishing research priorities

This strategy proposes an initial research agenda that focuses literacy research in Ontario around five major themes:

- adult learners and adult learning;
- program design, instructional content, and effective practices;
- practitioner training and professional development;
- learner assessment and the impact of adult literacy programming; and
- policy.

These five research themes resulted from the literature review and an analysis of the list of research priorities generated by the Ontario Literacy Research Work Group. (See Appendix 2.)

For each of the five research themes, a preliminary list of questions and topics is presented. The questions and topics have been drawn from the work group list and from information gathered through interviews and the literature review. It should be noted that these questions and topics are not being presented as research questions. They are proposed research topics for which researchers would be invited to shape specific research questions.

This research agenda is put forward as a work in progress. It is a working agenda that provides the baseline for the development of literacy research in Ontario. The five research themes in the research agenda provide a framework and set general directions for future research. The framework will be used to focus literacy research over the three-year period with the understanding that the specific priorities within each theme may change over time as research is conducted and new knowledge is gained. Throughout the development and implementation of the three-year plan, further work will be required to review and refine each of the themes and to set priorities within the themes.

Theme 1: Adult learners and adult learning

This theme focuses attention on the adult learner and the adult learning process. Advice from the field suggests that we do not know enough about adult learners in Ontario. In order to improve practice and develop successful recruitment activities, there is a need to know more about the adult population with low literacy skills. Out of this population, who participates in literacy programming and why? What motivates adults to return to literacy learning and what are the barriers that limit or prevent participation? What interventions have been successful in mitigating these barriers?

There is also a need to know more about how adults learn. Although there is a growing body of research and theoretical knowledge about how children acquire literacy skills, there is a much smaller body of research about how adults learn and improve literacy skills. The literature review and advice from the field indicate that we need to clarify what is known about the adult learning process, identify the gaps in our knowledge, and research how the gaps might be addressed. It may also be helpful to explore the relationships, if any, between how children learn and how adults learn.

The impact of linguistic and cultural background on the adult literacy learning process is a significant question, particularly for the Deaf, Native, and Francophone literacy streams. There are also major questions concerning the impact of the learners' social, economic, and cultural environment on the learning process. Another area requiring attention is the relationship between learning disabilities and the adult learning process.

Also of significance are questions relating to the impact of the rapidly changing technological environment on the learning process and its potential for enhancing learning opportunities.

Questions to be pursued under this research theme might include:

Adult learners
- What is the current, research-based knowledge about adult learners in Ontario, including their perspectives on learning?
- What is the longitudinal data on LBS learners? How successful are they in their studies? How do they use their learning?
- What groups make up IALS Levels 1 and 2? Who in levels 1 and 2 are being served by current programming? Who is participating in the LBS Program? Who is not participating? And why?

Motivation of adult learners
- Which outreach and recruitment strategies are most effective and for which population groups?
- What learning paths do people take and how do we support them?
- How can the motivation of adult learners be encouraged and supported?

Adult learning processes
- What is the current research-based knowledge about how adults learn to read and improve their literacy skills? What are the gaps in our knowledge and how can we fill the gaps?
- What skills do adults need to be effective learners?
- How does the multiple intelligences theory relate to the holistic learning approach of the Native literacy stream?

Adult literacy
- How is literacy understood in different streams, environments, or cultures?
- May we speak of a common set of generic literacy skills as opposed to multiple types of literacy skills?
- How do adults maintain and retain literacy skills?

Relationship of cultural and linguistic background to literacy learning

- How are the learning processes for minority language learners (Francophone literacy learners) affected by the surrounding linguistic and cultural environment?
- Does improving American Sign Language (ASL) skills make learning literacy skills easier?
- Does presenting content information in ASL make it easier to teach literacy skills?

Impact of the environment and other factors on ability to learn

- What is the relationship between cultural, social, and economic factors (such as language, health, violence, trauma, poverty, hunger, and homelessness) and the adult's ability to learn?
- What are the blocks to learning and how do practitioners address these blocks?

Learning disabilities and adult literacy

- Which learning disabilities affect literacy acquisition?
- What are the most common learning disabilities among Deaf learners?

Impact of new technologies and rapidly changing technology

- What is the impact of new technologies on literacy, the definition of literacy, and required levels of literacy?
- What is the relationship between computer skills and literacy skills?
- How do new technologies affect learning?
- What is the potential of new technologies to provide more and better learning opportunities?

Theme 2: Program delivery, instructional content, and effective practices

This theme is concerned with the types of approaches and instruction that work best, for which adult population groups, and in what context or environment. It is recognised that no single type of delivery or instructional approach will be effective for all adult learners. However, practitioners require more information to help them identify appropriate learning approaches. Research into the relative effectiveness of different approaches and delivery models for various population groups could help to inform policy decisions about which types of delivery to support.

Also to be addressed in this theme are questions about curriculum, educational content, and learning materials. How do adult learning theories inform curriculum? During recent years, there has been an emphasis on developing adult learning materials. How much emphasis, if any, should be placed on developing an easy-to-read body of literature for adults with low literacy skills?

An important research focus in this theme is to explore what constitutes best practice. What instructional practices have a significant impact and lead to meaningful learning?

Questions to be addressed under this theme might include:

Effectiveness of different models of program delivery
- How much instruction time is necessary for adults to achieve demonstrable progress?
- How does time spent in formal instruction relate to achieving learning outcomes?What is the relationship between formal and informal learning?
- How is the holistic approach defined?
- How can effective learning opportunities be provided through distance learning?
- How is workplace literacy most effectively delivered?

Instructional content
- What is appropriate curriculum for adult literacy?
- What are the links between research, theory, and curriculum development?
- What is the relationship between curriculum design and delivery?

Best practices
- What are the best ways to teach adults? What works well and why?
- How can instructional practice be improved?
- How do the accepted theories of adult learning relate to adult literacy learners? What are the implications of these theories for practice?

Program delivery and management
- What are the most effective models of service planning?
- What are best practices in effective management of administrative requirements within a delivery agency?

Theme 3: Practitioner training and professional development

In this theme, attention is focused on the practitioner. Skilled practitioners, whether paid or volunteer, are essential to the adult literacy system. There is scope for more research into the skills and knowledge required by adult literacy practitioners. For example, what initial training best equips practitioners to teach adult literacy? Another area to explore is determining which models of professional development have the most significant impact on practice.

Questions relating to this theme might include:

How can practitioner training and professional development more effectively serve adult literacy learning?
- What are the skills and abilities required to teach adult literacy learners?
- How can the impact of different forms of staff development on thought and practice of practitioners be assessed?
- How do practitioner enquiry and research in practice lend themselves to professional development?

Theme 4: Learner assessment and the impact of adult literacy programming

This theme is concerned with the impact of adult literacy instruction and programming, and whether literacy delivery has a significant learning impact on learners' lives.

What is the impact of adult literacy instruction?

- How do learners perceive the impact and effectiveness of literacy programming and instruction?
- Is it worth developing a long-term longitudinal study of people with low literacy skills who attend literacy programming, including a control group?
- How may statistical evidence of "soft" skills and outcomes be developed?

What are the most appropriate assessment approaches?

- How is assessment used in other systems?
- What are the values contained in various assessment approaches?
- How can quantitative and qualitative evidence be used in evaluating the effectiveness of various assessment approaches?

Theme 5: Literacy Policy

This theme focuses on policy, jurisdiction, structure, and systems. It addresses questions about the Ontario literacy system as a whole. For example, what provincial policies and structures are most effective in supporting quality adult literacy delivery in the province?

Questions relating to this theme might include:

How have literacy policy and delivery services evolved?

- What is the history of adult literacy, including literacy movements, government initiatives, policy, and support to delivery?
- How has the concept of literacy changed over time?
- What approaches to adult literacy have been adopted in other jurisdictions?

What is the relationship between the definition of the literacy issue and the attention given to it through policy, structure, and systems?

- What are the challenges to delivering literacy services within existing polices and for groups with particular needs?

How effective and efficient are different literacy models?

- How do learners know when they are in the appropriate stream?
- Where do hard-of-hearing learners fit into existing services and service streams?

Where are the gaps in establishing a seamless education system?

- How does literacy link with further education?
- What is the relationship between credit and non-credit learning in Ontario?
- What is the relationship between literacy and ESL, ALF, ASL, and Aboriginal languages?

What are the best practices in the development and delivery of effective information services for people with low literacy skills, such as clear language and design?

These five themes offer tremendous opportunities for exploration and discovery. The possible questions suggested here and, more importantly, their answers are of significance beyond Ontario's boundaries. This framework will therefore serve to keep Ontario's literacy services on the cutting edge and ensure Ontario plays a heightened role on a global scale.

Chapter 6 The structure of the Ontario literacy research strategy

Objectives, methodologies, proposed activities, and outcomes.

For each of the five major areas of activity, specific objectives, and methodologies have been identified. For each strategy, there are proposed activities and an indication of the organisations that might be best suited to implement these activities. The overall goal of the strategy is to focus energy and effort, to use existing infrastructure in the literacy field and elsewhere, and to build on the mandate, capacity, and expertise of existing organisations. The underlying premise of the strategy is that individuals and organisations will work in partnership and collaboration.

1. Setting directions for research.
2. Developing a research culture and expanding the knowledge base.
3. Building research capacity and ensuring fair access to research processes.
4. Ensuring high quality research.
5. Improving access to research outcomes.

1. Setting directions for research

This area of activity addresses the need for a research agenda. As a first step in setting directions for research, an initial research agenda is proposed. This section also addresses the need to establish research priorities and develop a plan for research in Ontario.

A brief glance at the history of literacy research in Ontario indicates that many previous research initiatives were developed and funded as discrete activities. For the most part, research themes and questions grew out of needs identified by a particular organisation or individual in a particular context. This record has led to some valuable research which has contributed to the knowledge base, but there has been no overall direction or co-ordination of research efforts.

In order to make effective use of the resources available to the literacy field and to ensure that the research that is conducted is relevant and meaningful to the field, it is recommended that an initial research agenda be adopted. This agenda provides a framework to help researchers and funding agencies focus and co-ordinate their efforts. It is also recommended that a three-year plan be developed to establish more specific directions for literacy research in the province.

2. Developing a research culture and expanding the knowledge base

This area of activity emphasises the importance of research in the adult literacy field in Ontario. It recognises the need to develop a research culture, to foster an environment where there is awareness of the significance, value, and applicability of literacy research. It calls for the development of an active research culture with a strong inter-relationship among theory, practice, and policy. It suggests strategies for documenting the existing knowledge base and building on this knowledge base through annual documentation of research conducted in the province. And, most importantly, it focuses on the need to apply research in practice.

3. Building research capacity and ensuring fair access to research processes

This area of activity focuses on increasing the capacity to do literacy research in Ontario. It is concerned with who conducts research and the types of research, from theoretical to practical, from academic to program-based. It addresses the need to expand and diversify the range of organisations and individuals involved in adult literacy research so that there is a balanced and effective research effort across the province.

The strategies outlined in this section propose that a wide range of organisations and individuals become involved in adult literacy research in Ontario, and that various research approaches and methodologies be used. Organisations are encouraged to co-ordinate and conduct research on behalf of their specific constituencies and to pursue research roles appropriate to their respective mandates; however, they are also encouraged to be aware of, and engage in, research partnerships. Cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral research activities are encouraged to help stimulate a symbiotic research environment.

While this strategy calls for a broad range of participants in the literacy research process, it also emphasises the important contribution of academic research. In Ontario as well as in other jurisdictions, there is significantly less academic research happening in the area of adult literacy than there is in the area of children's literacy. There is need for a concerted academic research effort to inform the theory and practice of adult literacy instruction. There is also a need to promote collaboration between academic researchers and practitioners in the literacy field. A university-based literacy research centre is proposed as a way of stimulating academic involvement in adult literacy research and encouraging increased communication between the academy and the field.

In building research capacity, it is particularly important to emphasise the involvement of practitioners in the research-practice cycle. Strategies in this section encourage and support adult literacy practitioners to become involved in research.

4. Ensuring high quality research

This area of activity focuses on ensuring that research conducted in the field is of high quality. It proposes mechanisms to ensure that literacy research projects meet appropriate professional and technical standards, and follow appropriate ethical practices.

Research involving humans poses challenging and complex moral questions. Ethical dilemmas often arise during the course of research and it is critical that researchers address these dilemmas so that human dignity is respected and the rights, privacy, and welfare of persons associated with the research are respected. Ethical guidelines for research are also concerned with respect for fairness, equity, and inclusiveness.

Another tool to help improve the quality of research is evaluation. This strategy recognises the need for evaluation at various stages in the research and development cycle.

5. Improving access to research outcomes

This area of activity is concerned with improving access to research outcomes. It features strategies that promote the broad dissemination and application of research results, particularly in the literacy field in Ontario but also beyond Ontario.

The dissemination and application of research results is an integral part of the research process. Sharing research findings helps to stimulate further research but, more importantly, it encourages and fosters improvements in practice. This strategy recommends an integrated, ongoing dissemination process that requires the active involvement and collaboration of researchers as well as organisations and individuals across the province. It builds on the information management and communications capacity and expertise of the AlphaPlus Centre in particular, but also utilises the existing infrastructure and communication networks of all literacy organisations in the province.

The literacy field in Ontario may also benefit from receiving information about research that has taken place in other provinces and other countries. Providing easy access to research information from other provinces and countries should be part of the dissemination strategy.

Chapter 7 Implementing the research strategy and support for literacy research in Ontario

Ontario is fortunate to have many elements of the necessary infrastructure to support research and development in its literacy field already in place. The new LBS Program offers an opportunity to focus government support for literacy development through this research strategy. The activities intended to support the strategy will strengthen and deepen the capacity of the field as well as ensure a cost-effective use of government funding.

The Ontario Literacy Research Strategy outlines an initial agenda for literacy research in Ontario. It expresses a commitment to developing an adult literacy research culture in Ontario and addresses the various ways in which Ontario can strengthen and develop its literacy research capacity.

In summary, the strategy recommends focusing research efforts so that future research in adult literacy will lead to significant and meaningful improvements in literacy education for adults in Ontario, and a more effective use of government funding for literacy.

Implementation of the strategy will be an evolving process. LBS will be guided by the strategy and it will be implemented through the regular research and development funding cycle and process. The National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) has long been a partner in the development of Ontario's literacy field. It is hoped that NLS will continue as a key partner in supporting this strategy.

Over the next three years, LBS staff will monitor the implementation of the strategy and report on its progress to the field.

The strategy will focus the efforts of the Ontario government to support literacy development and ensure that Ontario maintains its position of leadership in literacy in the developed world.

Next steps

1. Setting directions for research
   a) Develop a three-year plan for literacy research in Ontario
   b) Establish priorities within the plan.

2. Developing a research culture
   a) Establish research networks and circles, in person and on AlphaCom
   b) Establish a regular cycle of colloquia to bring together practitioners and experts in literacy
   c) AlphaPlus Centre to develop a summary review and critical analysis of Ontario literacy research, 1980 - 2000, and carry out ongoing reviews of literacy research activities in Ontario

d) Use the existing infrastructure to build the research culture:
    ! AlphaPlus to provide training to practitioners in research skills
    ! Umbrella organisations and sectoral bodies to promote the application of research
    ! Delivery agencies to implement research practices in programming.

3. Building research capacity
    a) Support the development of a university centre for adult literacy research in Ontario
    b) AlphaPlus Centre to develop research information services for four streams
    c) AlphaPlus Centre, Centre FORA, and Ningwakwe to advise and co-ordinate action research proposals within their existing mandate
    d) Umbrella organisations and sectoral bodies to identify research priorities within their existing mandates
    e) Regional networks to facilitate research circles at the regional and local level
    f) Support practitioners to participate in research.

4. Ensuring high quality research
    a) Promote best practices in applied research
    b) Ensure research projects meet standards for social science research
    c) Ensure research projects meet ethical guidelines and ethical research practice.

5. Improving access to research outcomes
    a) Ensure effective dissemination of research findings as a requirement of funding
    b) Support a feasibility study to explore the development of a scholarly journal on literacy in Canada
    c) Support a wide variety of media and methods to disseminate research results: conferences, reports, database, newsletters, workshops, training events
    d) Investigate the feasibility of a magazine targetted at literacy practitioners
    e) Expand database and co-ordinate data collection within the literacy field.

Acronyms

Centre FORA	Centre franco-ontarien de ressources en alphabétisation
CRIAW	Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women
DEET	Australian Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, and Training
GOLD	Goal: Ontario Literacy for Deaf People
ICAE	International Council for Adult Education
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
LBS	Literacy and Basic Skills
LFDS	Literacy Field Development Support Program
LFRG	Literacy Field Research Group
MET	Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (1993-1999)
MTCU	Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (1999-)
NCSALL	National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy
NIFL	National Institute for Literacy
NLS	National Literacy Secretariat
OISE/UT	Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
OLC	Ontario Literacy Coalition
ONLC	Ontario Native Literacy Coalition
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

Definitions

Academic research
- Theoretical research; research conducted under the auspices of an academic institution such as a university or college.

Academy
- A place of study (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th ed.); the phrase the academy is often used to refer collectively to universities and the people who teach and learn in the university environment.

Action research
- The systematic collection and analysis of information for the purpose of taking action and making change (Barnsley and Ellis 1992, 9).
- The study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it (Elliot 1991, 69).

Analysis
- The process of bringing order to the data, organising what is there into patterns, categories, or basic descriptive units (Barnsley and Ellis 1992, 89).

Andragogy
- The education of adults (as opposed to pedagogy which is the education of children).

Applied research
- Systematic investigation for practical use as opposed to being theoretical.

Case study
- A formal collection of evidence presented as an interpretive position of a "unique case", and includes discussion of the data collected during fieldwork and written up at the culmination of a cycle of action, or involvement in the research (McKernan, J. 1991).

Conventional research
- "Conventional research is rooted in positivism, which assumes knowledge is objective and independent from the knower. Discovery of objective knowledge depends on carefully controlling the variables in a given situation in order to isolate the particular influences of a particular variable. Since knowledge is objective, it is the same for everyone; if findings apply to a representative sample, they apply to the population as a whole" (Jacobson 1998).
- See also traditional research.

Curriculum
- The subjects that are studied or prescribed for study in school (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th ed.).

Dissemination

- Spread widely, generally used to refer to the spread of ideas (Concise Oxford dictionary, 9th ed.).

Field research

- See program-based research and practitioner research.

Informed consent

- "Agreement to participate in research based on all the available information that might influence the person's decision" (Barnsley and Ellis 1992, 89).

Participatory action research

- "A community directed process of collecting and analysing information on an issue or situation for the purpose of taking action and making change" (Barnsley and Ellis 1992, 90).

Participatory research

- "...[R]esearchers are actually participating in the practices being researched and working collaboratively with practitioners" (Usher and Bryant 1989, 125).

Pedgagogy

- The education of children (as opposed to andragogy which is the education of adults).

Positivist research

- Recognising only observable phenomenon (Concise Oxford Dictionary 6th ed.).
- The positivist or scientific paradigm leads us to regard the world as made up of observable, measurable facts. Positivist research generally involves a deductive approach and quantitative methods (Glesne and Peshkin 1992, 6-8, 19-20).
- See also conventional research.

Practitioner enquiry

- Practitioner enquiry is frequently seen to be inter-related with staff development, a process whereby practitioners "(a) form a research community from within a program or across a range of program sites; (b) undertake a collaborative investigation of selected issues in the field, using the literature and their own experiences, through which they critically analyse current theory and research from a field-based perspective; (c) generate research questions and conduct systematic and intentional inquiries into teaching, learning, and administration in their own program settings; (d) organise their research as social and collaborative processes; and (e) disseminate their findings through a range of oral and written presentations" (Lytle, Belzer, and Reumann 1993, 1-2).
- See also practitioner research.

Practitioner research

- Practitioner research, action research, practitioner enquiry, program-based research, field research...are used to name how practitioners engage in research or inquiry about practice (Horsman and Norton 1999).
- "Practitioner research is conducted by teachers seeking to improve practice, generating research findings in the same settings in which they will be utilised" (Jacobson 1998, 125).
- See also teacher research and research in practice.

Program-based research

- Program-based or reflective/field research is how literacy practitioners generate questions about their practice and conduct intentional inquiries that tell them more about their programs and learners (Henbest and VanderMarel 1997, 1).
- See also practitioner research.

Qualitative research

- The collection of data or information (by means of open-ended interviews, for example) that provides a detailed description of a situation, community or problem as the basis for developing an analysis (Barnsley and Ellis 1992, 90).
- "Three data gathering techniques dominate in qualitative inquiry: participant observation, interviewing, and document collection" (Glesne and Peshkin 1992, 24).

Quantitative research

- "Quantitative researchers seek explanations and predictions that will generalise to other persons and places. Careful sampling strategies and experimental designs are aspects of quantitative methods aimed at producing generalisable results. In quantitative research, the researcher's role is to observe and measure, and care is taken to keep the researcher from contaminating the data through personal involvement with the research subjects. Researcher objectivity is of utmost concern" (Glesne and Peshkin 1992, 5-6).

Reflective research

- See also practitioner research, teacher research, and practitioner inquiry.

Research

- The systematic investigation into and study of materials, sources, etc. in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th ed.).

Research in practice

- "The term research in practice is used to include a range of ways that practitioners might engage in research but also to explicitly identify reading and reflection as ways for practitioners to engage with research; research in practice refers to reading and responding to research, reflecting on practice in light of research, applying research findings to practice, and doing research about practice" (Horsman and Norton 1999, 2).

Scientific research

- According to rules laid down in exact science for performing observations and testing soundness of conclusions, systematic (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 6th ed.).
- See also conventional research.

Teacher research

- The goal of teacher research is professional development, to improve practice. Teacher research tends to focus on the regular life of the classroom and the research methods are usually qualitative (Bell 1998).
- See also practitioner research and practitioner inquiry.

Traditional research

- Generally, the goal of traditional research is to add to the body of knowledge, to seek a set of results that can be duplicated, that can be generalised. Traditional research often has experimental conditions and is usually quantitative and controlled (Bell 1998).
- See also scientific research, positivist research, and conventional research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1	The Ontario Literacy Research Strategy: Action Plan.
Appendix 2	Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group — Participants and list of meetings (1998/99).
Appendix 3	Ontario Research Strategy Principles. A statement of principles drafted by the Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group, December 7, 1998.
Appendix 4	Who does what? In Ontario, what kind of organisation is best equipped to carry out what type of research?
Appendix 5	Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group, Thursday, February 25, 1999. A summary of flip-chart notes from small group discussions on priorities for literacy research in Ontario.
Appendix 6	Adult literacy research journals — a selection.
Appendix 7	Centres for literacy research.
Appendix 8	Selected Ontario research activities.

Appendix 1 The Ontario Literacy Research Strategy: Action Plan

1. Setting directions for research

This area of activity highlights the initial research agenda. It also proposes a framework, a three-year planning cycle, and ensures that provincial research priorities are reviewed, refined, and implemented on an annual basis.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">1. Setting directions for research</th></tr>
<tr><th>Objectives</th><th>Methodologies</th><th>Proposed activities</th><th>Outcomes:</th></tr>
<tr><td>1.1 Develop a plan of action for literacy research in Ontario</td><td>1.1.1 Build on the initial research agenda to develop a three-year plan:
Build on the initial research agenda and priorities identified in this research strategy to develop a three-year plan for literacy research in Ontario.
Establish specific research questions and research priorities for each of the five research clusters:
• adult learners and adult learning
• program design, instructional content, and effective practices
• practitioner training and professional development
• learner assessment and the impact of literacy programming
• policy.</td><td>1.1.1 LBS to develop a three-year plan:
Invite the provincial services organisations, umbrella organisations, sectoral bodies, academic researchers, and practitioner researchers to contribute to the process of implementing the research strategy. Encourage these organisations and individuals to review the initial research agenda, and to identify research questions and priorities for each of the five research clusters.</td><td>1.1.1 Three-year plan:
A three-year plan for literacy research in Ontario will be developed and implemented.
A majority of proposals funded will fall within the 5 research clusters.</td></tr>
</table>

2. Developing a research culture

This area of activity emphasises the importance of research in the adult literacy field in Ontario. It recognises the need to develop a research culture, to foster an environment where there is awareness of the significance, value, and applicability of literacy research. It calls for the development of an active research culture with a strong inter-relationship between theory, practice, and policy. It suggests strategies for documenting the existing knowledge base and building on this knowledge base through annual documentation of research conducted in the province. Most importantly, it focuses on the need to apply research in practice.

2. Developing a research culture

Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
2.1 Build a research culture: Encourage the development of a vibrant research culture in the adult literacy field in Ontario. Promote awareness of, and involvement in, adult literacy research in each of the service streams and in the field as a whole. Build on and foster the strengths and skills of all interested individuals.	2.1.1 Promote networking and communication: Develop methods permitting individuals who are concerned about and involved in adult literacy research in Ontario (academic researchers, field researchers, practitioners, policy-makers, and learners) to connect and communicate with each other. Encourage an open and flexible network of individuals who will help to increase awareness of literacy research in Ontario, to encourage individuals to get involved in literacy research, and to provide a forum for researchers and practitioners to discuss and debate literacy research issues.	2.1.1 Leadership: AlphaPlus Centre to encourage and co-ordinate awareness of literacy research and provide opportunities for literacy researchers to exchange information and connect with each other and with literacy practitioners. Encourage links through informal research networks and research circles, both in-person and using tools, such as AlphaCom.	2.1.1 A developing research culture: There will be an increased awareness of adult literacy research as demonstrated by citations in popular and scholarly materials (newspapers, magazines, journals). Links will be established between literacy researchers in the academy and literacy researchers and practitioners in the field. Informal research circles and research networks of individuals interested in literacy research.

2. Developing a research culture

Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
2.2 Document existing knowledge base: Recognise and document the knowledge base that has been developed through previous adult literacy research in Ontario.	2.2.1 Review Ontario literacy research 1980 - 2000: Prepare a summary review and critical analysis of adult literacy research conducted in Ontario during the past 20 years. Identify significant findings and research results in each stream and for the field as a whole. Document what has been learned and the resulting knowledge base.	2.2.1 Review research: AlphaPlus to develop a summary review and critical analysis of adult literacy research conducted in Ontario from 1980 to 2000.	2.2.1 Historical review: Products will include: (1) a report that provides an overview and critical analysis of adult literacy research conducted in Ontario from 1980 to 2000, featuring significant findings and implications for each stream and the field as a whole (2) annotated bibliography of Ontario literacy research reports 1980 - 2000 (3) article(s) for publication in the proposed Ontario literacy magazine (Strategy 5.5.2) (4) an article for submission to a scholarly journal on literacy research in Canada (Strategy 5.5.1).

2. Developing a research culture			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
2.3 Monitor growth of the literacy knowledge base: Monitor and document the growth and expansion of the knowledge base through adult literacy research in Ontario.	2.3.1 Annual review of literacy research in Ontario: Conduct an annual critical review of research conducted in Ontario during the previous year. Highlight where and how the research contributes to the knowledge base, including its impact on program and policy. This annual review will build on and complement the Field development projects bulletin and the Directory of literacy research in Canada.	2.3.1 LBS to commission a review each year: AlphaPlus to carry out an annual critical review of literacy research conducted in Ontario during the previous year and its impact on the adult literacy knowledge base.	2.3.1 Annual review: Annual products to include: (1) a report which provides a critical review of literacy research conducted in Ontario during the previous year, highlighting significant findings (2) an article for publication in the proposed Ontario literacy magazine (Strategy 5.5.2) (3) an article for submission to the scholarly journal on literacy research in Canada (Strategy 5.5.1).

2. Developing a research culture			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
2.4 Promote the application of research in the field: Improve practice and provide more effective and more meaningful learning opportunities for adult literacy learners.	2.4.1 Encourage practitioners to acquire critical reflection skills and apply research in practice: Support initiatives and projects that focus on the application of research in the field. Develop and offer professional development for literacy practitioners in Ontario in how to access research results, how to develop critical reflection skills, how to read and write about research, and how to apply research in their programming.	2.4.1 Provide training in how to access and use research findings: LBS to develop partnerships to support a literacy centre that promotes the application of research in practice and assist practitioners to develop critical awareness of research. Develop a special initiative that will provide support to practitioners to apply, reflect on, and document research in practice. AlphaPlus to provide practitioner training and professional development on how to access research results, how to develop critical reflection skills, how to read and write about research, and how to apply research in practice.	2.4.1 Research results will be applied in practice as demonstrated by: There will be professional development opportunities that provide training in how to critically review research and apply research in practice. Practitioners will be involved in critical reviews of research, applying research in literacy programming, and translating research results into best practices. Delivery agencies will be involved in applying research in literacy delivery. Annual review of research will document how research is being applied in the field.

2. Developing a research culture			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
		2.4.1 cont'd Umbrella, sectoral, and service organisations to develop activities and services that will promote the application of research in the field. Delivery agencies to show in their business plans how literacy research will be implemented in practice.	

3. Building research capacity

This area of activity focuses on increasing the capacity to do literacy research in Ontario. It is concerned with what organisation conducts research and the types of research, from theoretical to practical. It is also concerned with establishing opportunities for a broad range of organisations and individuals to become involved in research.

3. Building research capacity			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
3.1 Encourage academic research in adult literacy and promote collaboration between academic researchers and the field: Encourage more academic researchers to become involved in adult literacy research in Ontario. Promote collaboration between academic researchers and the field. Provide opportunities for critical analysis of the relationship between theory and practice.	3.1.1 Establish a joint community/university centre for adult literacy research in Ontario: Identify a university to host a literacy research centre for a defined period of time (three-year period) in order to provide leadership and an academic environment to conduct research on the priorities identified in the strategy.	3.1.1 Determine an appropriate body to host the research centre: Identify an appropriate university, explore potential partnerships, develop and plan, as well as secure funding either through fee for service contracts or a Centre for Excellence.	3.1.1 Increased evidence of academic research on literacy: Literacy research centre established. Increased evidence of academic research on literacy will be reflected in the annual review. Research partnerships will be established between academic researchers and practitioners in the field.

3. Building research capacity			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
3.1 cont'd.	3.1.2 Conduct and co-ordinate action research at the provincial level: Provincial service organisations to co-ordinate and implement action research that responds to the needs of their mandate and reflects provincial research priorities.	3.1.2 Provincial service organisations to support action research: AlphaPlus Centre to develop, co-ordinate, and implement action research proposals that focus on multiple stream, cross-stream, cross-sectoral research, with particular emphasis on the Anglophone and Deaf Streams.	3.1.2 Action research conducted annually: - Multiple-stream research activities completed annually. - Anglophone and Deaf research co-ordinated.
		Centre FORA to develop action research proposals specific to Francophone literacy, including research with a focus on curriculum and materials development.	Francophone stream research activities related to curriculum and materials development completed annually.
		Ningwakwe Learning Press to develop action research proposals specific to Native literacy, including research with a focus on curriculum and materials development.	Native literacy research activities relating to curriculum and materials development completed annually.

3. Building research capacity			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
3.1 cont'd.	3.1.3 Conduct and coordinate research on literacy issues relevant to the streams: Provincial umbrella organisations to co-ordinate and conduct research and analysis of key literacy issues on behalf of their respective literacy streams, responding to their mandates and reflecting provincial research priorities.	3.1.3 Provincial umbrella organisations: Ontario Literacy Coalition, Ontario Native Literacy Coalition, GOLD, and the Coalition francophone pour l'alphabétisation et la formation de base en Ontario to identify research priorities and to develop, as part of the annual business planning process, research proposals specific to their respective constituencies.	3.1.3 Research in each stream conducted annually: Research activities for each of the service streams completed annually as demonstrated by successful applications, achievement of goals on time, and within budget.
	3.1.4 Conduct and co-ordinate research on literacy issues relevant to the sectors: Sectoral bodies to co-ordinate and conduct research and analysis of key literacy issues on behalf of their respective sectors, responding to the particular needs of agencies in the sector and reflecting provincial research priorities.	3.1.4 Sectoral bodies: Community Literacy Ontario, Laubach Literacy Ontario, CESBA, and ACAATO to develop, as part of the annual business planning process, research proposals specific to their respective sectors.	3.1.4 Research on sectoral issues conducted annually: Research activities for each of the sectors completed annually as demonstrated by successful applications, achievement of goals on time, and within budget.

3. Building research capacity

Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
3.1 cont'd.	3.1.5 Conduct LBS program-based research: Delivery agencies and practitioners to conduct research supporting the LBS program through research in practice, and practitioner enquiry.	3.1.5 Delivery agencies: Delivery agencies to identify how they use research in the course of the agency visit by LBS consultants . Delivery agency proposals to reflect provincial research priorities.	3.1.5 Program-based research conducted annually: LBS delivery agencies will apply successfully for project support, achieving the project goals on time and within budget. Program-based research activities will be reflected in the annual research review.

3. Building research capacity

Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
3.2 Develop research capacity: Promote and support the development of research capacity in the adult literacy field in Ontario, both within and across organisations, service streams, and sectors. Establish a co-ordinated and responsive research capacity that reflects the diversity of the Ontario literacy field. Develop and sustain cross-province research capacity by building on the current mandate and capacity of the provincial service organisations, umbrella organisations, sectoral bodies, and delivery agencies.	3.2.1 Provide integrated research information services: These services should respond to the needs of the field and reflect provincial research priorities.	3.2.1 Research collections, information services, and communications services: AlphaPlus Centre to develop an integrated package of current and relevant research information services for each of the four service streams including lending collections, on-line indexes, information services, electronic conferencing, electronic publishing, distance learning, and databases. (See also Strategies 5.1.2, 5.1.3, and 5.5.1 to 5.5.7.) AlphaPlus to develop, as part of the annual business planning process, an integrated set of research information services for each of the service streams including special research collections, reference services specific to research, and communications tools to support research activities.	3.2.1 Ready access to research information: AlphaPlus Centre services will include: - a high-quality collection of current and relevant research materials - index to on-line research resources - active electronic conferencing on research themes - distance learning activities to support research - database(s) of literacy research information.

3. Building research capacity

Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
3.3 Encourage practitioners to get involved in research: To build research capacity, it is particularly important to involve practitioners in the research-practice cycle. Strategies in this section encourage and support adult literacy practitioners to get involved in research.	3.3.1 Provide various avenues for practitioners to get involved in research: Encourage practitioners to participate in practitioner inquiry, research in practice, and formal research.	3.3.1 LBS, NLS, and other funding agencies to support practitioner research: Find ways to give practitioners release-time in order to participate in research. Options: (a) sabbaticals (b) grants for research in practice (c) release time for professional development activities that focus on research. Promote and support "research in practice".	3.3.1 Practitioners supported to participate in research: Sabbatical program for practitioners to conduct research. Research in practice activities. Improved literacy practices as demonstrated by more effective delivery of the LBS Program.

3. Building research capacity			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
3.3 cont'd.	3.3.2 Encourage the development of informal research circles: Introduce the concept of research circles and encourage practitioners with an interest in research to form research circles (in-person or electronically).	3.3.2 Support the development of research circles: Umbrella organisations and sectoral bodies to introduce the concept of research circles to their respective constituencies. Regional networks to facilitate at the regional and local level.	3.3.2 Links between practitioners on research issues: Practitioners involved in talking with other practitioners about how to do research and how to apply research in practice. Improved literacy practices as demonstrated by more effective delivery of the LBS Program.

3. Building research capacity			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
3.4 Promote a variety of research approaches: Promote and support a variety of types of research approaches and methodologies, including both theoretical and practical, both policy-related and program-based. Establish annual priorities for LBS research support through consultation with the literacy field.	3.4.1 Different types of research: Encourage the Ontario literacy field to conduct different types of research including: • Adult education (andragogy) • Theoretical • Historical • Statistical • Policy • Program-related (applied research, action research, practitioner inquiry, research in practice).	3.4.1 Funding agencies to provide balanced support: LBS, NLS, and other funding agencies to provide support for a variety of research approaches and methodologies, maintaining an appropriate balance. LBS to continue to commission research as appropriate using the research strategy as the framework.	3.4.1 Variety of research will result: A range of different types of research will be documented in the annual review. A majority of research projects funded through the LBS program fall within the priority areas.

3. Building research capacity			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
3.5 Recognise the research capacity of organisations: Build on existing strengths and make the best use of limited resources, recognise that certain organisations are better equipped to carry out particular types of research.	3.5.1 Build on organisational strengths: Determine which organisations are better suited or better equipped to implement particular types of research.	3.5.1 Assess capacity: When assessing research proposals, LBS, NLS, and other funding agencies to consider the capacity and suitability of the organisation to conduct particular types of research. Adult education (andragogy) • universities, colleges, professional associations, sectoral bodies Theoretical • universities and colleges Historical • service organisations, umbrella organisations Statistical • government, service organisations, umbrella organisations, regional networks	3.5.1 Research conducted by organisations best suited to carry out the particular type of research: The annual review of research will reflect a range of different types of research conducted by organisations with appropriate skills and capacity. Projects will meet their objectives, within budget, and on time. More effective delivery of the LBS Program by the LBS-funded agencies.

3. Building research capacity			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
3.5 cont'd.		3.5.1 cont'd. Jurisdictional • government, umbrella organisations, service organisations Program-related (research in practice) • delivery agencies, umbrella organisations, sectoral bodies Topical • delivery agencies, umbrella organisations, sectoral bodies.	

4. Ensuring high quality research

This area of activity focuses on ensuring that research conducted in the field is of high quality. It proposes mechanisms to ensure that literacy research projects meet appropriate professional and technical standards, and follow appropriate ethical practices.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">4. Ensuring high quality research</th></tr>
<tr><th>Objectives</th><th>Methodologies</th><th>Proposed activities</th><th>Outcomes:</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Promote good research practices:
Encourage and support the development of good research practice and the application of quality standards in literacy research.</td>
<td>4.1.1 Provide information about good research practices:
Make available information about generally accepted professional and technical standards for good practice in social science research. This includes materials that pertain directly to quality research standards and issues in the Anglophone, Deaf, Francophone, and Native streams.</td>
<td>4.1.1 Collect, lend, and index information about good research practices:
AlphaPlus Centre to acquire and lend relevant and current materials on quality standards for research and good research practice.
AlphaPlus Centre to index and link to on-line Internet resources on research standards and good research practice.</td>
<td>4.1.1 Information about good research practices will be accessible and used:
AlphaPlus Centre will have in place a collection of pertinent, current, and timely materials on quality standards for research and good research practices.
AlphaPlus Centre will have an index to on-line resources.
Statistical data showing use of the collection and index will be produced.</td>
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4. Ensuring high quality research			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
	4.1.2 Encourage Ontario researchers to study good research practices: Encourage literacy researchers in Ontario to identify appropriate quality standards for literacy research and to study, explore, and document examples of good research practice.	4.1.2 Support research that examines and documents good research practices: Support from LBS, NLS, and other funding agencies for research that identifies and documents quality standards and good research practice for adult literacy research.	4.1.2 Studies will be completed on good research practices: Research studies that explore and document good research practice in the literacy field in Ontario will be produced.

4. Ensuring high quality research

Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
4.2 Ensure that research standards are adopted: Ensure the application of high quality standards to the conduct of literacy research in Ontario.	4.2.1 Require research standards: Make it a condition of funded research that the proposal indicate how the research will meet generally accepted standards for social science research.	4.2.1 Make research standards a condition of funding: Ensure that funded projects meet generally accepted standards for social science research. Criteria: • appropriateness and relevance of research questions or hypotheses • appropriateness of research methodology • review of relevant literature • sampling design • data collection methods • methods for analysing and interpreting data • ethical guidelines • validity, reliability, and applicability of findings • evaluation Encourage other funders to adopt similar criteria.	4.2.1 Research will be of high quality: The annual independent evaluation of research (Strategy 4.4.1) will assess quality of research. Annual review of research (Strategy 1.3.1) will indicate that literacy research in Ontario is of high quality and meets accepted standards. Number of projects funded through the LBS Program which meet such standards.

4. Ensuring high quality research			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
4.3 Ensure research follows ethical guidelines: Ensure the application of appropriate ethical guidelines in conducting of all literacy research projects in Ontario.	4.3.1 Promote research ethics: Make available information about funding requirements relating to ethical guidelines and ethical research practice through AlphaPlus Centre.	4.3.1 Funding agencies to determine and specify their ethical requirements: LBS, NLS, and other funding agencies to provide information about their requirements with respect to ethical guidelines and ethical research practice.	4.3.1 Ethical requirements will be met by LBS-funded projects: • Funding information will clearly state the ethical requirements of funding agencies. • LBS project criteria will incorporate ethical guidelines. • Number of projects that meet these guidelines.
	4.3.2 Provide access to appropriate ethical guidelines: Materials that reflect on ethical review processes and address the problems in managing ethical dilemmas in research are available to the literacy field.	4.3.2 Collect, lend, and index materials on research ethics: AlphaPlus Centre to acquire and lend current copies of ethical guidelines for research, and index relevant Internet sources, including guidelines relevant to each stream. Also make available resource materials that reflect on ethical dilemmas and ethical issues in research.	4.3.2. Materials available and used: AlphaPlus Centre will have in place a collection of examples of ethical guidelines and a related index to on-line ethical guidelines. Use of the collection and index will be documented.

4. Ensuring high quality research

Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
4.3 cont'd.	4.3.3 Address ethical issues in the research proposal: Make it a condition of funded research that the research proposal indicate how the research will conform to ethical guidelines.	4.3.3 Ethical guidelines required: LBS and NLS to make it a condition of funding that the research proposal indicate ethical guidelines that will be used, anticipated ethical issues, and how they will be addressed. The proposal should identify any potential ethical issues and explain how these issues will be addressed.	4.3.3 All funded research will observe ethical guidelines: The annual independent evaluation of research (Strategy 4.4.1) will indicate ethical guidelines used. The annual review of research (Strategy 1.3.1) will reflect the ethical guidelines used.
	4.3.4 Research report to address ethical issues: Make it a condition of funded research that the research report indicate any ethical issues that arose during the research and how these issues were addressed.	4.3.4 Report on ethical issues required: LBS, NLS, and other funding agencies to make it a condition of funding that the research report include information about ethical issues encountered during the research and how they were addressed.	4.3.4 Reports on ethical issues: The annual independent evaluation of research (Strategy 4.4.1) will monitor and assess reporting on ethical issues.

4. Ensuring high quality research			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
4.4 Assess literacy research: Encourage monitoring and evaluation of research to assess whether literacy research in Ontario meets accepted standards, responds to the needs of the Ontario literacy field, and is of high quality.	4.4.1 Evaluate regularly: Develop processes for ongoing evaluation of the quality of research projects funded in Ontario.	4.4.1 Conduct a regular evaluation of Ontario literacy research: LBS to commission regularly independent evaluation of a sampling of adult literacy research projects funded by the LBS Program. The evaluation is to assess the quality of the research including relevance, methodology, standards, ethics, applicability.	4.4.1 Ongoing research evaluation: There will be a public report on the regular evaluation of research conducted in Ontario, including evaluative comments and suggestions for improvement. Regular evaluations will demonstrate whether quality of research is improving over time.
	4.4.2 Demonstrate how the research will be evaluated: The research proposal should indicate how the research will be evaluated and confirm that the results of the evaluation will be included in the research report.	4.4.2 Evaluation is a condition of funding: LBS, NLS, and other funding agencies to make it a condition of funding that the research proposal indicate how the research will be evaluated and that the evaluation results be included in the research report.	4.4.2. Evaluation results will appear in research reports: The annual independent evaluation of research (Strategy 4.4.1) will provide evidence of how researchers have evaluated their work.

4. Ensuring high quality research			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
4.5 Encourage researchers to develop skills in high quality research	4.5.1 Provide training in how to conduct high quality research: Provide professional development and training in how to conduct high quality research in adult literacy, including research standards, ethics, methodologies, and evaluation.	4.5.1 Professional development activities: Organisations and institutions that provide professional development and training for adult literacy practitioners are encouraged to develop and offer opportunities to learn how to carry out quality research in adult literacy, including research standards and research ethics. Centre for literacy research in Ontario to provide a training ground for literacy researchers.	4.5.1 Courses and workshops in research skills: Number of practitioners who participate in training in research standards, methods, ethics, and evaluation. Number of opportunities for learning research skills provided by LBS-funded agencies. Evaluation of professional development opportunities.

5. Improving access to research outcomes

This area of activity is concerned with improving access to research outcomes. It features strategies for the broad dissemination and application of research results throughout the literacy field and beyond Ontario.

5. Improving access to research outcomes			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.1 Ensure effective dissemination of research findings throughout Ontario: Ensure that research findings are widely disseminated in the literacy field in Ontario (to practitioners, researchers, policy-makers, program administrators, learners, and others).	5.1.1 Each research proposal to include dissemination strategies: Make it a condition of funding that research proposals include dissemination strategies that will ensure dissemination of research results throughout the literacy field in Ontario, using a variety of media and formats as specified in Strategy 5.6.	5.1.1 Dissemination strategy is a condition of funding: LBS, NLS, and other funding agencies to include dissemination strategies as a condition of funding.	5.1.1 Dissemination strategies will appear in all successful project proposals

5. Improving access to research outcomes			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.1 cont'd.	5.1.2 Research projects required to submit findings to Ontario research database(s): Make it a condition of funding that projects submit research project information and findings for inclusion in provincial research databases such as the Ontario Field Development Projects database and bulletin (co-ordinated by AlphaPlus Centre).	5.1.2 Submission of research information to Ontario database(s) is a condition of funding: LBS and NLS to make it a condition of funding that research project information and research findings be submitted to provincial research databases such as the Ontario Field Development Projects database and bulletin (co-ordinated by AlphaPlus Centre).	5.1.2 Database of research in Ontario: AlphaPlus will maintain a database of all literacy research in progress and completed in Ontario. Number and percentage of research proposals appearing in data base.

5. Improving access to research outcomes

Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.1 cont'd.	5.1.3 Ensure that Ontario literacy research reports and products are accessible: Make it a condition of funding that researchers submit a copy of the research report and any printed products arising out of the research to AlphaPlus Centre for the collection. Projects should also identify for AlphaPlus Centre any electronic publishing resulting from the research. (See also Strategies 5.6.6 and 5.6.7.)	5.1.3 Research reports to AlphaPlus Centre as a condition of funding: LBS and NLS to make it a condition of funding that a copy of the research report and any printed products be sent to AlphaPlus Centre, as well as notification of any electronic publishing resulting from the research.	5.1.3 Collection of research reports available: AlphaPlus Centre to provide a collection of all literacy research reports and an index to any related on-line reports and products. Number of research reports available at AlphaPlus Centre. Number of research reports used by AlphaPlus Centre patrons.

5. Improving access to research outcomes			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.2 Disseminate research findings beyond Ontario: Ensure that research findings are also distributed beyond Ontario to other jurisdictions and beyond the adult literacy field.	5.2.1 Submit Ontario research results to appropriate research databases outside Ontario: Require funded projects to submit research information to relevant databases outside Ontario, such as ERIC.	5.2.1 Submission of research results to relevant research database(s) outside Ontario is a condition of funding: LBS and NLS agencies to make it a condition of funding that research project information be submitted to relevant Canadian databases, appropriate databases in other countries, and international databases.	5.2.1 Ontario research results to be shared with other jurisdictions: All Ontario research project information and reports to appear in appropriate Canadian databases and other appropriate national or international databases.

5. Improving access to research outcomes			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.2 cont'd.	5.2.2 Disseminate research results beyond Ontario in print and electronically: Research proposals to include a strategy for disseminating research findings beyond Ontario and to other disciplines as appropriate. This dissemination includes submitting articles to literacy research journals in other countries and Internet publishing.	5.2.2 Strategy for disseminating research results beyond Ontario is a condition of funding: LBS, NLS, and other funding agencies to encourage researchers to include in their proposals a strategy for disseminating research findings beyond Ontario and to other disciplines as appropriate.	5.2.2 Increased awareness of Ontario literacy research in other jurisdiction and in other disciplines: As demonstrated by the number of national and international publications in which Ontario research is cited.

5. Improving access to research outcomes			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.3 Ensure effective dissemination to diverse target audiences: Ensure that research results are disseminated in a language and format appropriate to the target audience (English, French, ASL, clear language).	5.3.1 Research proposal to include dissemination plans appropriate to target audiences: The dissemination strategies should take into account the target audience(s) that would benefit from the research and the ways in which research findings can best be communicated to them, including appropriate language, format, and media type.	5.3.1 Dissemination in appropriate languages and formats is a condition of funding: LBS, NLS and other funding agencies to make it a condition of funding that the research proposal include plans to disseminate research findings in languages and formats appropriate to the target audiences (English, French, ASL, clear language and design).	5.3.1 Increased awareness of research findings: Practitioners in all streams and throughout the literacy field will demonstrate increased awareness of research results, particularly research results relevant to their practice. Practitioners will incorporate research findings into their delivery of the LBS Program.
5.4 Ensure that research results are made available to practitioners: Ensure that research results are distributed to practitioners and that practitioners are provided with opportunities to reflect on and apply research results.	5.4.1 Proposal to clarify how the research will relate to practice: Researchers to indicate how the research will relate to practice and to identify the specific strategies that will be used to disseminate findings to practitioners.	5.4.1 Relevance to practice is a condition of funding: LBS, NLS, and other funding agencies to make it a condition of funding that the research proposal identify how the research will relate to practice, and how findings will be disseminated to practitioners.	5.4.1 Research is more likely to have an impact on practice: Practitioners will be able to demonstrate how research has informed and improved practice. Colleges and faculties of education will incorporate results in course work.

5. Improving access to research outcomes

Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.5 Develop a comprehensive dissemination system: Develop a comprehensive system for disseminating adult literacy research information in Ontario using a wide variety of media and formats.	5.5.1 Explore the possibility of developing a scholarly journal on literacy research in Canada or establishing a partnership with a scholarly literacy journal in another country: Ontario to explore with other literacy partners from across Canada the possibility of developing an academic, refereed journal on literacy research in Canada.	5.5.1 Conduct consultations and a feasibility study to explore the possibility of developing a scholarly journal on literacy research in Canada: Conduct consultations and a feasibility study to assess the possibility of Ontario providing leadership for the development of a scholarly journal on literacy research in Canada. The journal would be developed in partnership with NLS and be located at a literacy research centre.	5.5.1 Clarification of Ontario's role in developing a scholarly journal on literacy research in Canada: Recommendations will be made regarding the feasibility of developing a scholarly literacy research journal in Canada and possible alternative publishing partnerships.

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<tr><th>Objectives</th><th>Methodologies</th><th>Proposed activities</th><th>Outcomes:</th></tr>
<tr><td>5.5 cont'd.
Whenever possible, this dissemination system builds on existing capacity, skills, and infrastructure (available in Ontario and elsewhere). In particular, it builds on the information management and communications capacity and expertise of the AlphaPlus Centre.

The intent is to make effective use of the various communication tools (in different languages, media, and formats) already offered by the provincial service organisations, umbrella organisations, and sectoral organisations.</td><td>5.5.1 cont'd.</td><td>5.5.1 cont'd.
Investigate a wide variety of media and formats:
• national scholarly journal on literacy research
• Ontario magazine
• research reports
• database of literacy research in Ontario
• electronic conferencing
• lending collections of Ontario literacy research reports
• indexes to electronic research materials
• newsletters, occasional papers, forums, workshops, training event, conferences, and other activities.</td><td>5.5.1 cont'd.</td></tr>
</table>

5. Improving access to research outcomes			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.5 cont'd. The dissemination system in Ontario should meet the specific needs within the province but it should also complement other literacy research dissemination tools available in Canada.	5.5.2 Ontario literacy magazine to support the application of research in practice: Develop and publish a magazine to disseminate research results broadly in the field in an accessible and inviting format.	5.5.2 Investigate feasibility of a magazine: That will report not only on research but also on the application of research and the translation of research results into best practices.	5.5.2 Ontario literacy research magazine for practitioners will be published: There will be an active dialogue on research, research results, and research in practice. Practitioners will use the magazine as a forum to read and write about how research is applied in the field. Research results will be applied in the delivery agencies in all streams.

5. Improving access to research outcomes			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.5 cont'd.	5.5.3 Research reports: Researchers to prepare reports on all research projects and disseminate in appropriate formats and language to target audiences. (See also Strategy 5.1.3.)	5.5.3 Make research reports a condition of funding: LBS and NLS to make it a condition of funding that the researcher will prepare, publish, and disseminate a research report and submit copies to AlphaPlus Centre.	5.5.3 Full reporting on literacy research in Ontario: All research reports and products to be collected and available for loan at Alpha Ontario (now AlphaPlus Centre).

5. Improving access to research outcomes

Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.5 cont'd.	5.5.4 Expand the field development projects database to become the Ontario research database: Maintain and update annually the database of information about literacy field development projects funded by LBS and NLS. Enhance this database to include information about other literacy research in Ontario (funded by sources other than the LBS Program). Make this information available in a timely manner in both English and French.	5.5.4 Expand and maintain database: AlphaPlus Centre to manage the database and co-ordinate data collection with provincial umbrella organisations (OLC, ONLC, GOLD, and La Coalition). Expand database to include information about other literacy research in Ontario (funded by sources other than MTCU-LBS). Make the database available on the Web.	5.5.4 Comprehensive database of literacy research in Ontario: Improved access to information about literacy research in Ontario. Increased awareness about literacy research in Ontario. Resource for other researchers to avoid duplication of effort.

5. Improving access to research outcomes

Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.5 cont'd.	5.5.5 Other research databases: Ensure that information about literacy research in Ontario is included in other literacy research databases in Canada as appropriate.	5.5.5 Inform researchers about databases where Ontario research can be profiled: AlphaPlus Centre to generate a list of relevant research databases in other provinces and other countries. Make this list available on-line to assist researchers in Ontario to identify where Ontario research should be listed.	5.5.5 Increased profile for Ontario literacy research in other jurisdictions: Ontario research information will appear in research databases in other provinces and other countries as appropriate.
	5.5.6 Electronic conferencing to support research: Use electronic conferencing to report research findings, and to encourage discussion and critical reflection. Also use electronic conferencing as a tool for research.	5.5.6 Use AlphaCom to support research: AlphaPlus Centre to actively promote the AlphaCom electronic conferencing system as a forum for reporting research results, discussing and reflecting on research, and carrying out research through conferencing.	5.5.6 Increased networking on research issues: A related increase in AlphaCom conferences on research. On-line research conducted on AlphaCom.

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<tr><th>Objectives</th><th>Methodologies</th><th>Proposed activities</th><th>Outcomes:</th></tr>
<tr><td>5.5 cont'd.</td><td>5.5.7 On-line index to on-line research materials:
Develop an on-line index to electronically published research proposals, reports, and products.</td><td>5.5.7 Locate and index on-line research reports and products:
AlphaPlus Centre will adapt the Open House Index to incorporate electronically published research reports and products. This index should cover all electronically published reports generated through literacy research in Ontario. In a second phase, expand the index to include on-line research reports from other jurisdictions.</td><td>5.5.7 On-line index to research reports on the Internet:
Increased awareness of literacy research in Ontario.
Subject access to literacy research reports.
AlphaPlus Centre will have a virtual library of on-line research proposals, reports, and products that will capture research in progress as well as completed research.</td></tr>
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5. Improving access to research outcomes			
Objectives	Methodologies	Proposed activities	Outcomes:
5.5 cont'd.	5.5.8 Encourage all practitioners to be aware of recent research: Highlight the outcomes of literacy research to practitioners in each stream through existing newsletters, forums, workshops, training events, conferences, and other activities. Emphasise research outcomes that can be applied in LBS practice.	5.5.8 Wide distribution of research information: Umbrella organisations and sectoral bodies to use existing communication tools, such as newsletters, workshops, conferences, and other similar activities to distribute research results as they relate to practice, to encourage reflexion and dialogue about research results, and to encourage application of research in practice. Sponsor colloquia and seminars of specialists and practitioners.	5.5.8 Increased practitioner awareness of literacy research: More research content in existing newsletters, workshops, conferences and other similar activities sponsored or disseminated by LBS-funded agencies, with a particular emphasis on applying research in practice.

Appendix 2 Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group — Participants and list of meetings (1998/99)

Name	Affiliation
Renee Abram	Ontario Native Literacy Coalition
Harold Alden	Ministry of Education and Training (now Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities)
Doug Anderson	Ministry of Education and Training (now Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities)
Marc Bissonnette	Route du Savoir
Yolande Clément	Centre FORA
Louise Ford	Ottawa Deaf Centre
Florence Gray	Ontario Native Literacy Coalition
Debbie Hallowell	Alpha-Amicale, Oshawa
Michael Johnny	Hamilton Indian Friendship Centre
Chris Kenopic	GOAL: Ontario Literacy for Deaf People (GOLD)
Maria King	Ningwakwe Learning Press
Lynne Lalonde	National Literacy Secretariat
Jane Larimer	AlphaPlus Centre
Claude Martel	Ministry of Education and Training (now Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities)
Linda Monteith	AlphaPlus Centre
Doug Rankin	Ontario Literacy Coalition
Margaret Robinson	National Literacy Secretariat
John Stanley	Ministry of Education and Training (now Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities)
Susan Sussman	Ontario Literacy Coalition
Gladys Watson	Ministry of Education and Training (now Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities)
Cheryl Wilson-Lum	GOAL: Ontario Literacy for Deaf People (GOLD)
Sandy Zimmerman	John Howard Society, Durham Region

February 25, 1999

Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group - List of Meetings

April 30, 1998	MET, Mowat Block, Queen's Park, 900 Bay Street, Toronto
June 11, 1998	GOLD, 150 Central Park Drive, Brampton
August 31, 1998	GOLD, 150 Central Park Drive, Brampton
December 7, 1998	OLC, 365 Bloor Street East, Toronto
February 25, 1999	OLC, 365 Bloor Street East, Toronto

Appendix 3 Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Principles. A statement of principles drafted by the Ontario Literacy Research Work Group, December 7, 1998

Ontario Research Strategy Principles

1. Research is necessary to support:

- field development (including curriculum);
- policy formation; and
- professional growth.

Research in literacy is a systematic process that enhances the knowledge base associated with literacy, by generating new knowledge and deeper understanding.

Research proposals clearly indicate how the research project is expected to contribute to the existing literacy knowledge base.

Reports from research projects clearly indicate the implications of research findings for the development of literacy agencies, policies, and practices. The reports are timely and the findings should be relevant and compelling.

2. Research must conform to ethical guidelines.

Ethical issues arise when research involves human subjects or focuses on important human issues. Ethical guidelines for research are intended to promote ethical research practices .

The cardinal principle of ethical research is to protect the dignity, well-being, and rights of people involved in the research.

All members of a research team are morally and legally responsible for safeguarding the welfare of the research participants.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities reviews all proposals for research funding in light of ethical guidelines required by the Ministry. These guidelines must satisfy the Ministry's expectations related to:

- informed consent by research subjects;
- special safeguards for vulnerable persons;
- standards of privacy and confidentiality;
- analysis of the harms and benefits to participants associated with the research; and

- any other considerations related to ethical research practice.

Research proposals identify any potential ethical issues related to the research and explain how these issues will be addressed by the researcher.

3. The methodology of research is consistent with its purpose.

In application, research findings may have relatively narrow impact (on an individual practitioner, a single agency, a single region) or broad impact (on an entire delivery sector or across the literacy field).

The choice of research method is determined by a variety of factors, including the nature and scope of the research question, how general the results are intended to be, and practical factors, such as time, funding, expertise, and institutional support.

Research intended to produce general findings (such as on provincial policy) meets standards that ensure the validity and reliability of findings.

All research projects should meet accepted standards for social science research. Those standards include considerations of:

- the appropriateness of research questions or hypotheses;
- adequacy of sampling;
- quality of data;
- the appropriateness of methodology;
- adequacy of interpretation; and
- relationships between data and conclusions.

4. The results of publicly funded research are available to the public.

All projects funded by MTCU are announced upon approval. The announcement should include a brief description.

All results from research projects are annotated and included in a summary document made available to the field.

Research reports should be disseminated at no cost to stakeholders, including the targeted audience. Reports should be marketed to a wider public.

Copies of all MTCU-funded research reports are to be catalogued and available at AlphaPlus Centre. The results of all research should be included in academic journals, where appropriate.

The results of all research projects should be made available to the media through press releases, press conferences, or summary documents, where appropriate.

Permission for copyright is obtained where materials are quoted or used.

Training sessions should be part of the research proposal, especially when the research concerns curriculum development.

5. **Partnerships are encouraged in order to attract the widest possible variety of stakeholders while ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clear.**

All projects will have advisory groups that represent the project's stakeholders, including those outside the literacy field.

Terms of reference for each partner involved in the project should be clarified in the grant proposal.

Terms of reference for each advisory group will be established and given to each member prior to the first meeting of the group.

6. **Research priorities will be established in consultation with the field.**

Umbrella organisations will establish annually a list of priorities for research and share these lists with MTCU.

Priorities identified in each stream should be shared with all streams. Common priorities should be presented as a partnership.

7. **Research builds on previous experience and knowledge.**

Research benefits from the literacy and adult education fields' experiences and knowledge.

Intensive research pertaining to the research topic should be carried out and detailed in the proposal.

8. **There must be support demonstrated for a research project beyond the sponsoring agency.**

Goals and objectives of the research, once developed, should be shared with the stream at the beginning of the planning process. A schedule must be supplied to let the field know if, how, and when the organisation may be participating in the process. It is necessary to provide advance notice.

9. Research results must be released in a language and format appropriate to the target audience.

Research reports must be written in clear language as well as be brief and concise.

Research pertaining to a particular stream should be published in the language and format used in that stream and understood by the report's target audience.

Research done and pertaining to all four streams must be published simultaneously in both official languages and in video or other formats for the Deaf stream.

Research pertaining to more than one stream but not all streams will be published in the language and format required by the target audience.

Language/Formats required:
Print/electronic (English)
Video (English and American Sign Language)
Print/electronic (French)

10. Evaluation is integral to research planning.

A continuous evaluation process should be integrated into the initial research proposal to assure:

- the quality of the research;
- the integrity of the actions, so that goals, objectives, and results are met; and
- comments and a critical analysis from outside evaluators are a part of the draft report.

All published research must have a print summary to highlight key findings.

Research results should be shared with the literacy field in the most practical way. (For example, new research on curriculum development should be presented in regional training sessions.)

Prepared by the Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group, December 7, 1998.

Appendix 4 Who does what? What kind of organisation is best equipped to carry out what type of research?

Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Meeting

December 7, 1998

Who does what?

In Ontario, what kind of organisation is best equipped to carry out what type of research?

Group 1

Type of Research	Type of Organisation
Theoretical	Universities (OISE, Carleton), colleges
Andragogy	Universities, colleges, professional associations, sectoral bodies
Historical	Service organisations, umbrella organisations
Topical (workplace, further training)	Government, umbrella organisations, service organisations, regional networks
Statistical	Government, service organisations, umbrella organisations, regional networks
Jurisdictional (policy/structure/funding)	Government, service organisations, umbrella organisations
Best practices and program outcomes	Umbrella organisations, sectoral bodies, delivery agencies
Action research (reflective practitioner)	Delivery agencies

Appendix 5 Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group, Thursday, February 25, 1999. A summary of flip-chart notes from small group discussions on priorities for literacy research in Ontario.

Ontario Literacy Research Strategy Work Group
Thursday, February 25, 1999
Summary of flip-chart notes from small group discussion
on
Priorities for literacy research in Ontario

GROUP 1:

Theoretical

- Children's learning processes vs. adults
- Learning processes for minority adult learners and environment affects
- Environment and adult learning relationships, such as health issues, socio-economic, language
- What is literacy? ...in different streams/environments/cultures?
- Link between children's education/experience of literacy and adult literacy
- Impact of technology on learning.

Adult Education

- Appropriate literacy materials for adults — evaluating effectiveness, targeted/specialized materials
- Necessary supports for learners
- How do we deal with different levels of learning/skill in one class?
- What approaches are most beneficial for different learners (one-on-one vs. larger classroom)?
- "Literature" for learners vs. learning materials
- What skills do adults need to be effective learners?

Historical

- Longitudinal changes in literacy — how concept of literacy has changed over time
- What is history of adult literacy movements? State of the art analysis.

Topical

- Barriers to offering programs
- Distance education
- Workplace literacy
- Links between literacy and further learning
- Learning disabilities and adult literacy
- Family literacy/inter-generational
- Qualitative research
- Holistic learning.

Statistical

- What is progress?
- Longitudinal data on learners
- Have we got valid statistics? Who is included, excluded? Sample sizes.

Jurisdictional/Policy

- Identifying challenges to delivering literacy services
    - within existing policies
    - for special needs groups/areas
- Comparative studies of how literacy is delivered/treated across jurisdictions
    - different provinces, countries
    - outcomes of different approaches
- Where are gaps in establishing a seamless education system?
- Boundaries: practitioner's roles and responsibilities vs. other social services.

Best Practice/Program Outcomes

- Profile of adult learner (marketing and outreach)
    - who is in programs?
    - who is not in programs?
- Are learners in the right stream?
- What learning paths do people take and how do we support them?
- How much instruction time is necessary for adults?
- How do we use learning outcomes?
- Effects of volunteers/professional trainers/staff
    - skills and abilities required to teach.

Action Research

Group 1 considered "action research" to be a method of research and therefore did not include any topics under this heading.

GROUP 2:

Members of Group 2 placed orange dots beside items to indicate the degree of priority they would like to assign. The number of orange dots assigned to each item is indicated in brackets for example, (2).

Theoretical

- (1) How adults learn to read (and how it does/doesn't relate to how children learn to read)
- (2) Investigating/respecting cultural/philosophical assumptions/outlooks that guide literacy research and identifying non-dominant approaches that can underly new research questions
- Maintaining/retaining literacy
- Holistic approach within Native Stream; for example, culturally-based theory and practice

- Multiple literacies vs. literacy as a unitary set of skills
- (1) Learning disabilities among Deaf learners
- Dyslexia and adult literacy
- (3) Relationship of linguistic background to literacy learning
- (1) Relationship of literacy learning to what is known about cognitive/affective development.

Adult Education

- (2) Long-term longitudinal study, with control group, of people with low literacy who attend literacy education
- What are the best ways to teach adults?
- Definition of curriculum in literacy
- How new assessment and evaluation methods impact on curriculum development and delivery
- Impact of learning outcomes model
- Assessment approaches (grounded in research)
- Comparative research on literacy approaches in different societies
- (1) How learners perceive literacy and literacy education (as compared with how the "literate" see it).

Historical

- Evolution of literacy policy and funding.

Topical

- (4) Accommodations for adults with low literacy skills other than literacy programs (for example, adults over 55 may not want a program, but need access to information)
- Family literacy
- (1) Linking literacy with upgrading (within MET)
- (2) Relationship between literacy and ESL, ALF, ASL
- (1) Improved ASL skills makes learning literacy skills easier?
- (1) Does presenting content information in ASL make it easier to teach literacy skills?
- Relation of computer skills to literacy skills.

Statistical

- Building statistical evidence on "soft" skills and outcomes
- Impact of hunger, homelessness on ability to learn literacy
- (1) Demographic analysis: what groups make up IALS Levels 1 and 2?
- Who in Levels I and II are literacy programs providing services to?
- Relationship between definition of extent of literacy problem and policy attention
- (½) Quantitative vs qualitative evidence — respective uses and values.

Jurisdictional

- (½) Effectiveness, efficiency of four stream model
- (1) What is the Native Stream (clients, approaches taken, organisations funded)?

- Relationship of literacy, ESL, credit, non-credit (segmentation of field)
- Hard of hearing learners — where do they fit in existing services?
- (1) Who "owns" literacy — in government — health, justice, education (and within education, workplace), community?
- What funding is really necessary to do what programs are supposed to do?

Best Practice and Program Outcomes

- Looking at impact of different forms of staff development on thought and practice of practitioners
- Effective models of service planning
- (2) Reflecting on investigating what practices have made a difference for literacy learners
- Effectiveness of volunteer model vs. paid instructors.

Action Research (Reflective Practitioner)

- (1) Ways of facilitating individual instructors revisiting their own practice
- What are the motivators for retaining learners, instructors, volunteers?
- Effective management of administrative requirements within community program setting.

Friday, April 16, 1999.

Appendix 6 Adult literacy research journals — a selection

Journals that focus on research in adult literacy and adult education — a selected listing

Adult basic education: An interdisciplinary journal for adult literacy educators
Adult basic education is published three times per year by the Commission on Adult Basic Education, a commission of the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE). It is published by AAACE at Piedmont College, Demorest, Georgia.

Adult basic education is a double-blind, peer review, scholarly journal with a practical intent devoted to improving the efforts of adult educators working with low-literate, educationally disadvantaged, and educationally oppressed people. The journal seeks to meet the information needs of adult educators in all types of literacy programs. The journal publishes critical essays, research of all types, philosophical and theoretical pieces, and other scholarly work of relevance to those working in adult literacy education.

Subscription:
Mr. Larry Ady
Adult Basic Education
P.O. Box 592053
Orlando, Florida
U.S.A. 32859-2053

Adult education quarterly. A journal of research and theory
Adult education quarterly is a refereed journal committed to the dissemination of research and theory in adult and continuing education. The editors seek submissions that report research, build theory, interpret and review literature, or critique articles previously published in Adult Education Quarterly.

Subscription:
American Association for Adult and Continuing Education
1200 - 19th Street N.W., Suite 300
Washington, D.C.
U.S.A. 20036-2422
US $25.00
Cheques payable to Commission on Adult Basic Education

Adult learning.
Adult learning is a magazine for adult educators designed to provide short, well-written professionally oriented articles with a problem-solving emphasis. It is published four times annually by the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education. The audience for Adult learning includes all individuals who design, manage, teach, conduct, and evaluate programs of adult and continuing education broadly defined. The magazine includes personal reflections, resources, feature articles, and theme articles. Themes have included: educating the work force, partnerships, the older learner, literacy, staff development, special learning needs, instructional technology,

and learning how to learn.

Subscription:	American Association for Adult and Continuing Education 1200 - 19th Street N.W., Suite 300 Washington, D.C. U.S.A. 20036-2422 US $29.00

Canadian journal for the study of adult education/La revue canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes (CJSAE/RCÉÉA)
This journal is published by the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education/Association canadienne pour l'étude de l'éducation des adultes. Articles may be submitted in either French or English. Information about the journal is available on-line: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/CASAE/cjsaetoc.html

Subscription:	Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education 6746, ave Casgrain Montreal, Quebec H2S 2Z7 514-277-9051

Converse
Converse is the quarterly publication of the Network of Women in Further Education in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Contents of this magazine include news, stories of practice, and theoretical articles.

Subscription:	Philippa Costigan, National Coordinator Network of Women in Futher Education Ross House, 247-251 Flinders Lane Melbourne 3000 Australia Tel: 03 9654 1327 FAX: 03 9654 6831 nowinfe@vicnet.net.au

Fine print. The journal of the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council.
Fine Print is published quarterly by the VALBEC (the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council Inc.) in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Fine Print include articles by both academics and practitioners, including articles on research. Information about the journal is available on-line: http://avoca.vicnet.net.au/~ valbec/onlinesub.html

Subscription:	VALBEC (The Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council Inc.) Ross House, 2nd Floor 247 Flinders Lane Melbourne, Victoria 3000 Australia Tel: 61 3 9650 6906

FAX: 61 3 9654 1321
valbec@vicnet.net.au

Focus on basics
Focus on basics is the quarterly publication of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). It presents best practices, current research on adult learnings and literacy, and how research is used by adult basic education teachers, counsellors, program administrators, and policy makers.

Focus on basics is dedicated to connecting research with practice, to connecting teachers with research and researchers with the reality of the classroom, and by doing so, making adult basic education research more relevant to the field. On-line: http://hugse1.harvard.edu/~ NCSALL/fob1.htm

Subscription:
World Education
Focus on Basics
Attn: Kimberly French
44 Farnsworth Street
Boston, Massachusetts
U.S.A. 02210-1211
US $8.00 for 4 issues

Journal of adolescent and adult literacy
The Journal of adolescent and adult literacy is published eight times per year by:

International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Road
P.O. Box 8139
Newark, Delaware
U.S.A. 19714-8139
302-731-1600

Literacy and numeracy studies: An international journal in the education and training of adults
Literacy and numeracy studies is published by the Adult Literacy Research Network, Centre for Language and Literacy, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. It builds on and replaces Open letter: Australian journal for adult literacy research and practice.

Literacy and numeracy studies aims to promote research and scholarship around the many and complex ways that adult literacy and numeracy research are implicated in adult life. Contributions are welcomed from a variety of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives on any aspect of literacy and numeracy practice. Literacy and numeracy studies is a refereed journal that is published twice a year.

Subscription:
Ms. Sue Anderson, Administrative Assistant
Literacy and Numeracy Studies
Adult Literacy Research Network
Centre for Language and Literacy

School of Adult Education
University of Technology, Sydney
PO Box U 123, Broadway 2007
NSW, Australia
+ 61 (0) 2 9514 3817
+ 61 (0) 2 9514 3939 fax
sue.anderson@education.uts.edu.au

Review of adult literacy and learning

Review of adult literacy and learning is a new journal published by the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). The first volume will be available in September 1999. The aim of this journal is to serve the field of adult literacy through a yearly publication of scholarly reviews of major issues, current research, and best practices in the field of adult learning and literacy. Each volume will include the year in review in adult literacy in the United States with information about major events and initiatives in policy, research, and practice. There will be articles that focus on the four themes of the NCSALL research agenda. Each volume will also feature an article on adult learning and literacy in another country.

For further information, contact:

John Cummings, Director
NCSALL
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Nichols House, Appian Way
Cambridge, Massachusetts
U.S.A. 02138
617-495-4834

Appendix 7 Centres for literacy research

Centre for Research on Literacy

The Centre for Research on Literacy is associated with the Faculty of Education of the University of Alberta. It is an academic research centre addressing research questions concerning literacy for children and for adults. The Centre is funded by the University of Alberta. Recently, the Centre received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat to develop a Directory of Literacy Research in Canada.

Linda Phillips, Director
Centre for Research on Literacy
Faculty of Education
University of Alberta
linda.phillips@ualberta.ca
403-492-4250

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL)

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) is a collaborative effort between the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and World Education. NCSALL's partners include the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee, Rutgers University, and Portland State University. There will also be a partner in the Midwest.

The goal of NCSALL is to help the field of adult basic education define a comprehensive research agenda; to pursue basic and applied research under that agenda; to build partnerships between researchers and practitioners; and to disseminate research and best practices to practitioners, scholars, and policy makers. NCSALL is funded by the U.S. Department of Education through its Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and OERI's National Institute for Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning (PLLI).

NCSALL's research program is focused on improving the quality of practice in educational programs that serve adult learners. This includes research agendas for adult literacy and for adult ESL. Activities include research projects, research briefs, a practitioner journal entitled Focus on basics and an associated email-based discussion group, an annual scholarly review on literacy and adult learning, practitioner dissemination and research network, and scholarships for doctoral study.

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Appendix 8 Selected Ontario Research Activities

Networking for program-based research

In 1988, a research and practice group was formed in Ontario with encouragement from the provincial Ministry responsible for literacy. Later called the Program-Based Research Special Interest Group, then the Literacy Field Research Group, this small group of practitioners operated as a network to seek support for, and gain credibility for, program-based research. This group was also interested in setting priorities for practitioner research. The group held a conference, wrote, and published a manual to teach practitioners to carry out research, and led workshops in support of this manual. The group also published a series of occasional papers. This group continued to meet until 1996 (Henbest and VanderMarel 1997, Miniely 1992, Miniely 1993, Horsman and Norton 1999: Appendix).

Connecting theory and practice

One example of a research initiative linking theory and practice is the project that Guy Ewing completed on the question of incorporating phonics into whole language reading instruction. With the support of the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy, Guy Ewing was able to secure a grant to take an extended leave from the literacy agency where he was teaching. He conducted research, reviewed theoretical literature, and interviewed literacy practitioners and learners. The research outcomes included a book, Don't talk to me about vowels, and workshops with practitioners, including an electronic workshop on AlphaCom, in order to assist practitioners in reviewing and applying the research in practice.

This example is interesting since it highlights the types of support mechanisms required to facilitate successful research in practice. In this case, the researcher used a range of supports available in the literacy field, including:

- financial support for a practitioner to obtain leave from teaching and administration for an extended period;
- knowledge in the field acquired through interviews with practitioners and learners;
- theoretical and practical resource materials accessed through the reference and collection services at Alpha Ontario (now AlphaPlus Centre) and university libraries;
- support from AlphaCom to establish an electronic conference related to the research and the resulting publication; and
- a practitioner-friendly publication and workshops to disseminate research outcomes and to assist practitioners to take up this material in practice.

Sectoral research

Community Literacy Ontario, in collaboration with Laubach Literacy Ontario, conducted a survey to gather data about volunteers and volunteering in the Ontario literacy field in September 1996. Results of the survey were released and have provided a useful framework for the two organisations in providing services to their constituencies. Community Literacy Ontario has continued research into volunteer management in order to support community literacy agencies in developing appropriate volunteer management procedures.

On-line research

Laubach Literacy Ontario recently conducted two on-line research projects that were collaborative initiatives with partners outside the literacy field. The first project, conducted in partnership with the Canadian Council for Social Development, was an on-line survey about the use of computers and the Internet in literacy programs in Ontario. The second project, in partnership with Sir Wilfrid Laurier University, was an on-line survey to assess the effectiveness and quality of the basic tutor training workshop attended by Laubach tutors.

Technology-related research

AlphaCom implemented research to gather data about the hardware capacity of the literacy field in Ontario. AlphaCom conducted explorations and projects in the area of computer-based learning and literacy learning using distance education.

AlphaPlus Centre is conducting a large-scale action research project to develop Alpharoute, a Web-based distance learning environment offered in English and in French. The Phase 2 research findings indicate that the AlphaRoute environment is effective with learners at all levels of the LBS Learning Outcomes levels.

Learning reflective research skills through professional development

Some of the professional development courses for literacy practitioners in Ontario have provided opportunities for practitioners to acquire skills in reflective research. The Teacher of Adults — Literacy Educator college certificate program (formerly LOON — Literacy Opportunities in Ontario North) incorporated a course on reflective research. The Literacy Worker's Course offered by the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy provides another example of professional development that incorporates reflective research and practitioner inquiry (Henbest and VanderMarel 1997).

Research by service organisations

In 1996-1997, Centre FORA conducted a research project to expand knowledge about the reading and writing habits of Francophones in Ontario. This province-wide study compared franco-ontariens to a target region and population in Quebec. A report was prepared and released with a press conference. The impact of the research is that it is now possible to target literacy activities more effectively.

GOLD conducted a pilot project in 1997-1998, researching video conferencing in the Deaf adult learning community. This project examined various technical aspects of video conferencing and e-mail to document the usefulness of technology in the Deaf literacy community.

Research by umbrella organisations

The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition conducted a survey in 1996-1997 to establish a preliminary profile of the Native literacy community as part of the Native Literacy Planning Process. This survey was complemented by a study that articulated the philosophy for working with Native learners in literacy agencies. The resulting book presents a vision to guide Native literacy.

Cross-stream and cross-sectoral research initiatives

During 1997-1998, Alpha Ontario (now AlphaPlus Centre) provided co-ordination and leadership for a cross-stream research project to assess adult literacy learning materials used in Ontario. This study examined what materials are being used and why, the future adult learning materials needed, gaps, and the implications for the field. This project was a collaborative effort involving the four service streams. The research report is published in English, and French, as well as in an ASL/LSQ video version. Policy recommendations concern the future development of curriculum and learning materials.